



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2 50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 49.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S PHANTOM HUNT

OR
THE GOLD GUIDE OF COLORADO CANYON



BY THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

THEN BEGAN A DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR MASTERY BETWEEN BUFFALO BILL AND THE SKELETON SCOUT.



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BUFFALO BILL'S PHANTOM HUNT;

OR,

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE BRANDED HAND.

"Who is that man coming toward us?"

"That man I thought everybody know'd; but, as yer are a Englishman an' a stranger here, I guesses yer is ignorant, pard."

"I confess that I am very ignorant about this frontier country and its people."

"Ther man yer sees coming yonder are my good pard, Buf'ler Bill, ther greatest rider, shot and red-skin fighter on these here plains."

One of the speakers was Major St. John Mildmay, an officer of the English army, who had served with distinction in India and Egypt, a fine-looking, powerfully-built, courtly gentleman.

The other was a typical American plainsman, in look and dress.

The two were standing before an adobe tavern on the Santa Fé trail, and the horseman who had attracted the Englishman was slowly riding toward them.

"That man, there, is the powerful Buffalo Bill?"

"That's Bill," answered Harry Hazard.

"I had thought him different—large, uncouth, fierce-faced, of the desperado type; but, instead, he appears a courtly knight of the border, picturesque and——"

"Pard, I don't just catch on ter yer hifalutin' lingo, for I talks plain American; but, ef yer is slanderin' Bill Cody, he don't deserve it, fer he are as clean cut a man as ever yer see."

"Why, my friend, I am more pleased because I find him so different from what I expected, and I have read much about him."

"As I told you, Mr. Hazard——"

"Lordy, don't mister me, fer I'm plain old Harry Hazard, scout, trapper, Injun fighter and guide."

The Englishman smiled, and continued:

"Well, Friend Hazard, I have a letter to the great scout, and came here to see him; but I was told that he was away on a special mission, so I wanted the right man for work to be done, and was directed to you."

"From our talk together, I am fully satisfied that you can serve me well, but, if the great scout will

take full control, I will be glad to have him do so, yet will wish your services also."

"I'm with yer, pard, and I'll go that much sooner and more pleased if Buffalo Bill commands the outfit, for you wants ter go into a country whar few men has been, and danger is as thick as parsons at a camp-meetin', so it takes narve and skill ter git thar and back, as Bill will tell yer."

"Your confidence in the scout but increases my desire to have him go in charge of my expedition. There he comes, now."

The scout approached, walking with upright, military bearing, and, with a salute, he said, in his pleasant way:

"I am told that you were seeking me, sir—for I am William Cody."

"Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, sir—so-called."

"I am Major St. John Mildmay, of the British army, and I came to the frontier to seek you, for you are the very man to do the work I wish, and I bear a letter to you."

"Major Mildmay, I am at your service."

The Englishman at once led the way to his room, asking old Harry to accompany them.

Entering the Englishman's room in the border tavern, after he had bid them be seated, he said:

"Let me tell you, Mr. Cody, I——"

"I beg pardon, my lord, but I prefer the name I am best known by—Buffalo Bill."

"All right; it is the name you are making famous the world over. Well, Buffalo Bill, I am here on a very important mission, and I bear letters from my government indorsing me."

"Your face will do that, sir."

"Thank you; but when I spoke to the Earl of Enders of my mission, he promptly told me that you were the one man who could make my mission one of success, so gave me this letter to you," and Major Mildmay handed the letter to the scout, who glanced over it, and again bade him welcome to the borderland.

"I am a soldier, and have seen hard service in the saddle in India, Australia and Egypt, with considerable fighting as well, so I am not what you would call here a tenderfoot, though one, perhaps, in your life here on the border."

"I mention this to show you that I will not be in your way on our expedition, if you will undertake it for me."

"You appear like a man able to take care of himself; but the mission, sir?" and Buffalo Bill gazed at the tall, athletic, splendid form with a look of admiration.

"My mission, in a word, Buffalo Bill, involves a large fortune, and is to find a missing heir, or proof of his death."

After a moment of silence, as though reviewing

the past events that had led up to his coming to the United States frontier, Major Mildmay said, in a low, earnest tone:

"What I say to you both I wish to communicate in confidence."

"Certainly, sir," assented Buffalo Bill; "we will so receive it."

"You bet we don't gossip, pard," added old Harry.

"My reason for secrecy is that nothing may be done to thwart me in my mission, as there may be, for, as I said, a great fortune is involved, and human life as well, besides the honor of a proud name in England."

"When serving in India I had a companion who was as a brother to me, and to whom I twice owed my life, which he saved at almost the certainty of meeting death himself."

"Once, when I was wounded, and my horse killed, he returned to my side, beat off the Sepoys who were crowding upon me, aided me to his saddle, and catching hold of the tail of his horse, thus left the field."

"Again, when I fell backward before an enraged tiger, he threw himself before the infuriated brute, dropped on one knee, and, with a revolver only, killed him, the animal falling so near that he gave him a severe blow with his paw; but I was saved from death."

"On another occasion when a brother officer, under the impression that I had wronged him, and in whose way I stood in the line of promotion, sought a quarrel with me, just as I was starting upon a long expedition, similar to scouting in your country, challenged me, my good friend—knowing his deadly aim and that he was proud of his career as a duelist—before my return, when I was to meet him, resented a remark he made against me; a meeting followed, and the man I was to face when I got back I found dead, run through the heart by my defender."

"I speak of these circumstances to show you that I have reason in what I now wish to do for him."

"But a shadow fell upon him in a love affair he had, where the maiden he hoped to wed was forced by her parents to discard him."

"Resigning his commission of captain in the British army in India, he left the country and came to the United States, severing all ties that bound him to England."

"After his coming here, I had a letter from him, dated at Santa Fé, New Mexico, and stating that he was going into the mining country of the American Sierras to make a fortune of his own."

"Since then no word has come from him to any of his old associates."

"In the meantime, his elder brother, Sir Duncan, who was, as the elder brother of the family, the heir to the title and estates, was killed by being thrown from his horse, so that leaves my friend the inheritor of the title and fortune when his father passes away."

"Now, you understand my mission, Buffalo Bill, and, as Lady May Melville is still unmarried—and my friend is the heir to the title and estates of the Villers—her family would be only too glad to allow the union, and I only hope to find my lost friend through your aid."

Buffalo Bill had listened with the deepest attention to the story of St. John Mildmay, the gallant major of the British Lancer Guards.

He was struck with admiration for the Englishman's devotion to his friend.

"Well, Major Mildmay, I am now desirous to know just in what way I can help you?"

"As I said, my last letter was from Santa Fé."

"How long ago was that, sir?"

"Three years ago. Here is the letter, which you can read—when I was in India I received it, and five years after he left us."

"And he writes here that he is going to the mines?"

"Yes, he stated that he had lost what money he had in an investment in the ranching business, and was going to try and find a fortune in the mines."

"And you desire to hunt through the mines for him?"

"Yes—in Arizona, Colorado, Utah and New Mexico, and I need your valuable services to aid me."

"I will go, my lord, but upon certain conditions," answered Buffalo Bill, quietly.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOUT'S PLOT.

"Name your conditions, Buffalo Bill, and I will meet them, whatever the cost," declared Mildmay, eagerly, when he heard Buffalo Bill state that he would go upon certain conditions.

The scout smiled, and replied:

"The cost is not what I mean, sir, for let me tell you that I am in the government employ—chief of scouts of General Miles' command—and so can accept no outside pay; nor would I do so if I could, for any service I might render you."

"You are certainly very kind, sir."

"No—only just; but let me state that the conditions were to obtain the consent of my commanding officer, and if you can give me a couple of weeks' delay to complete a mission I am now on, I will return to the fort, and then come to join you."

"I may say that I have letters from the secretary of war to the frontier commanding officers, telling them to lend me every possible aid, for I stopped in Washington on my way here."

"I will ask you to present these letters to your commander for me."

"I will do so with pleasure, major."

"And what shall I do in the meanwhile?"

"Organize your expedition, sir, under old Harry

here, and go to a point I will designate on a map which I will give you, and where I will find you."

"I will obey your instructions to the letter, Buffalo Bill."

"You will need a camp outfit, pack-horses and stores for several months, say for a dozen men, for I will join you with six of my scouts, and, besides Old Harry, you had best take a camp hustler, horse-wrangler and a cook, for I will furnish the fighting men when I come, except Harry here, who is worth half-a-dozen men any day in a tussle with Indians or outlaws, should you happen upon any, while he is as good a scout and guide as you could find."

"I am glad to hear so good a report of our friend here, Buffalo Bill, and am sure he is deserving of it, while I will rely upon him for just what we need for the expedition and the class of men to get; but don't you think, as you said we would go into a dangerous country, I had better employ more men? For, remember, expense is not to be taken into consideration on this expedition."

"You can engage others if you desire, major, but you must know that that camp-hustler, wrangler and the cook are all frontiersmen and good fighters, so, with Old Harry and yourself, there will be five of you, and I feel very sure that you are a host in yourself, and by no means a tenderfoot."

"I fear I shall at first prove so, but I am anxious to learn; still it may be well to take two extra hands along."

"It may be, sir, a good idea, in case any of the outfit pass in their chips, or you are attacked; but, let me tell you again, sir, you can rely upon Old Harry for guidance and in a fight, for he is a thorough plainsman."

"I shall do so; but when do you think we should start?"

"To-morrow afternoon, sir, for it will be a long trail, and one you can make by easy stages to where I join you."

"About whar will thet be, Pard Bill?" asked Old Harry.

"You know the old Mormon fort, Maroni, Harry?"

The old scout started and looked fixedly at Buffalo Bill, while he replied, after some hesitation:

"Yas, I'm one o' ther few ter say he knows old Fort Maroni," replied Old Harry, seriously.

"Yes, old pard, I am aware of the fact that there are few who know the spot, save the older Mormons, and our scouts and trappers, and that strange stories are told of that party of the country, and all that: but this letter of Captain Villers states, I see, that he is going with a small party who have heard of rich gold mines in the Colorado River cañons, and their trail will be *via* the San Francisco Mountains," said Buffalo Bill, glancing over the well-worn letter.

"I understand, Bill, and it's them trails they says is sartin death for them as follows 'em."

"Are you afraid to go, old man?"

"Now, look here, Bill, did yer ever know me ter git skeert?" reproachfully asked the old fellow.

"I confess I never did; but these stories have a smack of superstition in them, and I know you have always stood in awe of spooks," and the scout smiled.

"Waal, spooks or spirits, devils or Injuns, I'm with yer, even though I has ter tackle ther Skeleton Scout hisself."

"The Skeleton Scout?" asked Major Mildmay, with surprise and interest, and Buffalo Bill replied:

"I will tell you of the Skeleton Scout, my lord."

"Yas, Pard Bill, tell all yer knows about ther Skeleton Scout, and then I'll chip in with my leetle story," added old Harry, with considerable enthusiasm.

"What I really know, Harry, is next to nothing, but I have heard a great deal about this apparition of the trails, the Skeleton Scout, and from men who profess to have seen him."

"You don't believe in him, then, Bill?"

"I do not, old man, for I am not of the superstitious kind, and whenever I have run down a ghost or spirit scarecrow, I have proven it to be real flesh and blood."

"You both interest me greatly in your reference to this Skeleton Scout, for on the trail here, a few nights ago in camp, I heard it referred to as a weird being that haunted certain trails," remarked Mildmay.

"That is the story. Those who penetrate to the region of the San Francisco Mountains in Arizona, are reported to have seen a skeleton form, sometimes on a skeleton horse, at other times on foot; he is said to have warned them back from going in that direction."

"Indeed?"

"It is also stated that he has been seen flitting about the camps at night, and skeleton forms painted in red have been discovered upon the cliffs along the trail and even on the ground, always with the warning:

"Turn back! the Land of Death lies beyond!"

"This is remarkable, Buffalo Bill; but you say this has happened upon the trail we are to follow?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Have you ever seen any one who actually saw this apparition of the hills?"

"Yes, sir, several; but they were men whom I would not believe under oath, and you know a lie started upon its travels will make lightning speed and grow from a pigmy to a giant before it has traveled far."

"Very true; and you doubt the existence of such a person, whether in masquerade or not?"

"I do, my lord."

"Yet it is possible that some one may be masquerading in skeleton form, for some purpose of his own."

"It is possible, my lord, but not probable, for that is a most dangerous country to dwell in, as the Indians are always hostile, and I can see no motive for such masquerading or trail haunting."

"White men do not go there, then?"

"The Mormons passed up through there some years ago in large force, sir, so were strong enough to resist, and halted for a while on the march to Utah at old Fort Maroni, and gave it the name."

"Then there was a train of immigrants, over three hundred strong, known as the Boston settlers who settled near the San Francisco Mountains, but within a year the redskins drove them away from the beautiful valley where they had located."

"Again, there was a band of gold prospectors who went there and have never been heard from since while several other smaller parties are missing, the fate being unknown."

"I was down at Fort Wingate a year ago, and heard there rumors of the Skeleton Scout, and I am going there when I return from my present mission, and will hasten on after you, for your trail lies by the fort, and it is the last succor you can look to behind you. But, keep up a determination not to allow the weird stories to drive you off your trail."

"I will be most careful in this respect, Buffalo Bill, and, more, I will encourage them by offering a very liberal reward for the one who can discover the Skeleton Scout and give me a look at him."

"Yes, it would be a great thing, Major Mildmay, if you could carry back with you to England a trophy of your hunt on our frontier in the shape of a skeleton form," asserted the scout, laughing.

"It would indeed be something to be proud of, and the man who gives me a sight of the Skeleton Scout shall receive the reward I offer."

"It kinder appears ter me, pard, that I war going ter git ther money you offers," Old Harry quietly observed.

"I only hope that you will, my friend."

"You says, Pard Bill, as how them as have seen ther Skeleton Scout you wouldn't believe on oath."

"True, old man."

"Does yer think I'm given ter lyin', Bill?"

"Never would suspect you of such a sin, old man."

"Then you would take my word for it, if I saw what I had seen?"

"Most surely, I would."

"Then let me tell you, Bill, and you, too, Pard English, that I has seen ther Skeleton Scout," with the emphatic rejoinder of the old plainsman.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD PLAINSMAN.

Buffalo Bill was certainly surprised at the remark of Old Harry, the plainsman.

He had never had reason to doubt the word of the man, and knew him to be reliable, brave and not given to talking too much.

He was a man who had lived his life among deadliest of dangers, had been a noted Indian fighter, was a friend to tie to in trouble, and was trusted and respected by all who knew him.

Old Harry had one great fault, or sin, for he made the latter out of it.

That was, he was a natural gambler.

He bet on a horserace, on the weather, and all else that he found convenient to wager on, and yet only staked small sums then; but when he sold his pelts, or came out of the mines with money, he would indulge in the fascinating game of poker until his last cent was gone.

He was never known to win, so played for the pleasure of losing. His first deed was, when he had money, to deposit with a landlord of some hotel a snug sum against his becoming penniless, and also to pay to a bartender an amount of money for treating his friends when he should go broke.

If he ran over these sums in his credit, he promptly settled when he got more money.

He was a "financial wreck" at the time Major Mildmay came to the little town in New Mexico, and the landlord had at once said a good word for Old Harry, and it ended in the Englishman securing his services.

That crime had driven Old Harry to the frontier to live no one believed, and he said it was because he had married a woman whom he thought to be an angel, but had discovered was a devil.

"She were too much for me, pard, I tell ye, and when I found I were living in a climate too hot for me, and gittin' roasted for breakfast, dinner and supper, I jist lit out fer ther Far West, preferring ter fight Injuns ter facin' ther chin music of my wife.

"I had a enemy, who were my rival for her love and hand, and he never forgive me for cuttin' him out, so when I went away I jist let folks think I hed died out here, and with my dying breath asked my enemy to forgive me, and left him my widow with my blessing.

"Waal, he accepted the keepsake, and I am avenged for all he did ag'in me."

Such was Old Harry's explanation of his going West, and it was doubtless the true one.

Holding him in respect as he did, Buffalo Bill, when he heard him say that he had seen the Skeleton Scout, said:

"Well, old man, tell us your story of this weird haunter of the trails, for I will believe you."

"Yes, I shall be most glad to hear what you have to say, my friend," Mildmay rejoined.

"Yer see, pards, it were a year ago, when I went on a trail all alone.

"A party started out gold-huntin' some three years ago, and it was their intention to go to the Colorado River Cañon country and try their luck, dangerous as they knew it to be.

"Among them was a dear friend o' mine, a youngish man, who had twice helped me out o' trouble, once when I would have been kilt by a desperado I was gambling with, and again when I needed money, for his purse was open to me as my own.

"I met him on the trail here, when he was sick, and nursed him for a week or so, and he never forgot it, yer see.

"He was not a talkin' man, so I knowed nothin' about him more than that he was a gent clean through, handsome as a pictur', brave and generous, and a true pard.

"Well, he went with the party of gold-hunters, while I was away on a trail, and when I come back I found a letter he had left me.

"In it was fifty dollars in gold, and he said he would not need it, and he hoped to make a fortune, and if so he would care for me in my old age.

"Well, they said as how the party was murdered, for they never tarned up, any of ther seven who started, and so I decided to take ther trail and see ef I could find any trace of 'em.

"I went as far as ther San Francisco Mountains, and one night in camp I suddenly see out in the darkness a man's skeleton form.

"I hain't ohe ter shoot at a dead man, but I sent a bullet over his head, and hands waved at me and the form disappeared.

"Ther next day I seen ther skeleton figger drawn in red in my trail, and again on a cliff.

"That night I seen ther form itself again, and on a cliff in red letters of fire I read:

"'Turn back! You go to the land o' death by this trail!'"

"Did you turn back, Harry?"

"I did, Bill; you bet I did, and I made good time back to ther settlements; but I never spoke to any man until now about what I seen on that Colorado River trail," and the words of the old man were most impressively uttered.

That Old Harry told just what he had really seen both Mildmay and Buffalo Bill were assured, though each had his own opinion as to the cause of the weird apparition and strange warning.

At last the scout asked:

"Have you never known the fate of your friend, Pard Harry, since he left on that trail?"

"Never."

"Have heard nothing from any of them?"

"Not a word."

"How many did you say there were in the party?"

"Seven."

"This was three years ago?"

"Yas."

"And it was three years ago that your friend started, according to this letter, and there were seven in his party," said Buffalo Bill to Major Mildmay.

"True, and the letter tells who were along, giving the names of the men as they were known to him—read what the letter says, Buffalo Bill."

The scout again turned to the letter, and read:

In our party are seven all told, and I have been elected captain of what they call out here the outfit.

I have two congenial comrades in men who have come West to make a fortune, a guide by the name of Denny—

"I know'd him, and I wouldn't trust him to watch a dead man ter keep ther cats off, let alone to watch live men in danger," said Old Harry.

"I am sorry to hear this; but read on, Buffalo Bill."

Continuing, the scout read:

We have a cook, and two others who go as camp men, and, with myself, make up the outfit.

The cook and the last two named I do not care much for, as they have hard faces; but then one cannot choose his companions or attendants in this country.

There is one old scout I would like to have gone with me, for he is a big hearted man, brave, skilled in all the work on the border, and we became fast friends, he having nursed me when I was ill, and afterward I was enabled to serve him in return; but the dear old fellow is away, not to return for months, so I go without him.

This expedition will make or mar my life.

If I get a fortune in the mines I will return to England to enjoy it; but if I fail, then look upon me as dead to the world, the once happy past, our old life, bygone friendships and all, for I shall bury myself here in these wilds, a wreck, and willing to live and die unknown among those to whom a cruel fate has driven me.

But through all, my dear Mildmay, I can never forget you.

Ever your attached comrade,

CHAMP.

The scout ceased reading, and Old Harry started as he ended the letter, and asked quickly:

"What were ther name that was writ at ther end o' that letter, Bill?"

"'Champ,' it is signed."

"The name we gave Villers in India."

"He was known even among the men of our regiment as 'Captain Champ,'" said Mildmay.

"Captain Champ!"

"Why, pard, that were the name of my young friend," said Old Harry.

"Your young friend?"

"Yes, sir, ther man I larnt ter love like a son, and who went on that gold-huntin' trail with Denny, and whom I'd give much ter run ag'in once more."

"I axed him his name one day, and he said I was ter call him Champ, while, as he always had a certain leader-like way about him, the boys called him captain, and it got to be Cap'n Champ."

"The same that he bore in India—your friend and mine, old gentleman, are one and the same," cried the Englishman, excitedly.

"Then ther Lord grant we find him, and, bein' sich is ther case, Pard English, and I don't see w' it hain't, I jist calls our bargain off we made atwec us, and goes with yer without takin' one cent pay."

"No, my friend, I will not accept your generous offer, and, unless you take pay, you will have to remain behind, for your time is valuable, I well know."

"Then I goes, but only make it a game for money if we finds him."

"All right, we will have it so if you wish; but Buffalo Bill, what is your opinion about this Captain Champ being my friend Villers?"

"I was certain that such was the case before you said that the two were identical," replied the scout.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUSPICIOUS GUIDE.

"Well, Harry, we have a double reason now for finding your Captain Champ, for he is our mutual friend," said Mildmay, after a few questions and answers among the three convinced all that there was not the slightest doubt but that the one who had been the old scout's comrade was none other than Captain Sir Trevor Villers.

"I remember the report coming to the fort that the band of seven gold-hunters had mysteriously disappeared, no one ever having had a word from any of them since their departure," said Buffalo Bill.

"That's so, Bill, no one hain't, and yet I somehow always expected I'd see my pard, Captain Champ, ag'in."

"I hope we may see him, Harry, and believe it too, for we must find him," Mildmay said.

"There is one thing I don't exactly like, pard."

"Out with it, old man," Buffalo Bill said.

"Yer sees I don't exzactly like ther comp'nny Champ went along with, fer that feller Denny were as crooked as a grapevine and bad med'cine from wayback, and them as he engaged must have been of ther same kind."

"I hope not," anxiously said Major Mildmay.

"You suspect treachery on the part of those who went with him, I take it, Harry?" said Buffalo Bill.

"Yas, Bill, that be my argiment."

"You have reasons for so believing that you have not yet made known to Major Mildmay, I plainly see, so come, old man, there must be no underhand work between us now, so out with it."

"Bill, you read men's faces same as an open book for I merely thought what you sees in my looks."

"Then you have some secret knowledge regarding this mission our friend went on?"

"No, pard, I hain't no knowledge of the expedition, but I only thinks I has seen Denny, the Gold Guide, since they went out."

"Ha! that looks bad, indeed," cried Buffalo Bill, hastily.

"When, and where was it, old man?"

"You knows Denny is called the Gold Guide out here, frum the fact that he is allus gittin' up expeditions to go to new gold mines?"

"Well?"

"I know he has gone out with a dozen, and I never heerd that any of them he guided had struck it rich, though I does know that one party got drowned, all but Denny and a few others, and another band was massacred."

"And Denny escaped?"

"Fact is he did, Bill."

"The Indians killed them?"

"That was what were said."

"Well?"

"Another party got attacked by road-agents and wiped out and robbed."

"And Denny?"

"He escaped."

"Any more?"

"Not that I knows for sart'in about, Bill, but them is enough ter show thet Denny hain't no safe guide for them he guides, don't yer see?"

"I should think he was a very fatal guide in reality, that is to those he leads."

"But you say you think you have seen him since the time he went out with Captain Champ?"

"Yes, Bill."

"When?"

"A year ago."

"Where?"

"At the post."

"Tell us about it, old man."

"Yes, let us know just what reason you have to suspect treachery on the guide's part," urged Mildmay, who had been deeply interested in all the old scout had said, and grew more and more anxious as the words of Buffalo Bill led to the belief that Denny, the Gold Guide, had proven a traitor.

"It were at the post, as I said, a year ago, and whar I hed gone in ter sell pelts to ther trader."

"I seen a man come in thar ridin' one horse and with four pack-animals, and heerd he had come ter buy provisions."

"He were changed in face frum ther one I know'd as Denny, the Gold Guide, but somehow he reminded me so much of him thet I went up to him, hit him on ther back and called him by name."

"What did he do?"

"He jumped saine as though ther town officer hed come upon him for crime, and his face turned white, but he said he wasn't no darned Denny, nor no friend o' mine."

"If yer hain't him, then yer is dodgin' ther law, as I scared yer mighty bad," says I to him, and I walked away.

"Waal, he got his provisions put up and lit out that night, but, darn me, ther more I remember him, ther more I am willing ter take oath that it were Denny, ther Gold Guide," and the old scout spoke emphatically.

The recital of the old scout's suspicions regarding Denny, the Gold Guide, left an unpleasant feeling, for it seemed to show, if Denny was the man seen, that Champ had been dealt treacherously with.

Seeing this, Buffalo Bill said cheerily:

"Well, what if it was Denny himself that you saw, Old Harry? That only goes to prove that Captain Champ found him out in his wickedness and drove him out of camp."

"Now, my belief is, frum all that I have heard, that Captain Champ is none other than Captain Villers, that he went with this expedition of seven to the Colorado River country in search of gold, and, like others, the party has not since been heard from."

"They may have been massacred by Indians, perhaps were attacked by road-agents and wiped out; it may have been they were treacherously dealt with, led into a trap and murdered, and we may never know their fate."

"But, on the other hand, they may have found new mines, struck it rich, and still be laying up treasures. My idea is that we should start upon their trail, though it is a cold one and hard to follow, and do all in our power to hunt them down and know just what has been their fate."

"Such is my desire, and my opinion, Buffalo Bill, and I say let us start on this trail and stick to it until the truth is known," Major Mildmay said, earnestly.

"I'm with you," was Old Harry's eager response.

"Yes, I will start on my way at dawn on the morrow, deliver my dispatches, accomplish my mission, and go to meet you at old Fort Maroni, to which Harry here can guide you."

"That we will do, and press on by easy marches to Fort Maroni, where you will join us within two weeks, Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, major, within that time."

"And Old Harry will tell me just what the outfit needs in the way of arms, munitions, stores, traps and horses?"

"There is no one better able to tell you, sir, or to select what you need, for Old Harry knows; but I would suggest that you take along several extra horses, for there is no telling what need you may have of them, and I shall do the same."

"And there will be seven of us, all told?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will bring a like force?"

"From seven to nine, sir."

"And you kin bet, pard, thar won't be no better men to be found than Bill will bring, clean cut, full o' narve, dead shots, who kin foller a bird's trail, ride a

horse, shoot ter kill, throw a lariat and outfight any gang o' fellers yer ever met, or will meet, and they'd foller Buff'ler Bill ter hell and back just fer ther fun o' it."

Mildmay smiled at this praise of the scout's men, and said:

"I have no doubt, Harry, I'll find them all that you say, and I shall be glad to have such splendid allies in the work before us."

"They will do their duty, major, as you will find," was Buffalo Bill's modest praise of his men, and soon after the three parted for the night, the scout giving the Englishman a few hints to guide him for his own comfort on the long trail. He told him just what he might expect to meet with in that wild land of the Indian and the outlaw, of danger and hardships untold.

When Mildmay arose for breakfast the following morning he found that Buffalo Bill had departed several hours before.

Old Harry had gotten up to see him off, and, having bid him good-by and had a confidential chat with him in comparing the notes, he set out on his rounds of the stores to see where he could secure just what was needed for the expedition.

Mildmay had given him liberty to purchase all that was needed, without regard to cost, and to secure the best.

He kept his eyes open also for men to take along, and was very much disappointed to find that those he had relied upon finding were away and would not return for some weeks.

It was impossible to delay the start for them, and so he had to select the best he could, though nearly all of them were strangers to him.

He found one man, however, who said he had just come up from Texas with a herd of cattle, and had four splendid fellows with him, whom he could recommend. After seeing them, Mildmay and Old Harry decided that they would do, and the next morning, with seven all told in the party, the search expedition pulled out on the trail for Arizona.

The expedition was a complete one, as far as outfitting was concerned.

Old Harry had shown himself a good caterer, in the way of getting provisions, and he had secured the very best horses and equipments.

There were provisions of the very best kind, and enough to last for three months, with ammunition in plenty, repeating rifles, revolvers and several shot-guns for small game.

India rubber coats and blankets, with plenty of bedding, were also carried, so that in rainy or dry weather the searchers would be well protected and cared for.

Half-a-dozen horses were used as pack-animals, and there were as many extras, besides those ridden by the party, while a couple of fine dogs had

been secured to aid in trailing and for better security in guarding the camp. The keen scent of the dogs would give warning of any unseen danger near them, which a man in the darkness could not see.

The first halt was made at noon, some twenty miles out from the town, and during the ride there Mildmay had had a chance to study his men.

Old Harry had openly expressed his disappointment regarding them, for he said:

"They is a unknown quantity, and I never bets on a man until I has seen him tried, and them pilgrims is all strangers ter me.

"Now ther Englishman will stick like a pinepitch plaster, for he shows that in his face, and he'll make a game one in a scrimmage; but them men I does not know.

"Maybe they is all right, and maybe they isn't, but ther proof o' ther puddin' is arter yer hev eat it."

When the trail was taken, anxious to learn, Mildmay had ridden ahead with Old Harry, and had all explained to him that he wished to familiarize himself with, and the scout was very glad to instruct him.

But, riding ahead, he had no opportunity upon the march of seeing the men and knowing them better.

The noonday halt gave him, therefore, the chance to do so.

The cook set to work like one who knew his business, and soon had a tempting dinner ready; but when he would have set the meal apart for him, Mildmay said:

"Oh, no, I chip in, as you say, with the men, and we all eat together."

This seemed to please the men, and caused Old Harry to mutter to himself:

"I told yer so.

"Thet English hain't no slouch, and he do know a heap for a tenderfoot, and one, too, from across the pond.

"I has heerd it said Britishers wants ter make out they knows it all, when what they don't know would fill a mighty big book.

"But this one does know, and is as modest about it as a young gal at her first ball."

Mildmay congratulated himself on four of his men, at least, for well he knew what Old Harry was.

There were two other scouts along, and they acted as assistant guides, scouts and guards.

One was a Texan, the other a Mexican, and both seemed to understand the duties they had to perform.

They were quiet men, having little to say, were well mounted, and used Mexican saddles and bridles. Their weapons were of the best, and they were handsome fellows, as well.

One answered to the name of "Texas," the other called himself "Mexican Joe."

When the night camp was come to, after a ride of

forty miles, and supper was over, Texas and Mexican Joe got out a flute and guitar and began to play.

They sung well together, also, and Mildmay congratulated himself upon having gotten together for man-hunting a very genial and sociable lot of men.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEST.

The third day on the trail, Mildmay was riding ahead with Old Harry, as was his general custom, when he said:

"Well, old man, we have got a good lot of fellows, after all, for this expedition."

"I hain't proud of 'em, cap'n," answered the old scout, who, with the others, had taken to calling the English officer "captain," as he was the head of the expedition, and in their opinion deserved the title.

"I do not see why, Pard Harry, for we have been three days and nights on the march, and I never saw a man handle loose horses better than does the wrangler."

"He's good in his way, sart'in."

"And we could not ask for a better attendant than the camp hustler."

"He knows his biz, and he does it, cap'n."

"Do you find any objection to the cook?"

"Fu'st-class, though maybe he be a leetle Frenchy in his cookin', and French dishes would kill a coyote ef he were put on 'em for steady diet."

"Well, I am satisfied with his cooking, Pard Harry, for his bread is fine, his flap-jacks all that one could ask for, and he broils a steak to a turn."

"He does all that."

"And there is Texas, what a voice he has, and he plays the flute so well."

"Never seen a man what played a flute who would do to tie to; but the fiddle be my choice for real good music."

"But the Texan is a man to be relied on."

"I'll tell ye more when he be put to ther test."

"And the other?"

"Ther Greaser?"

"Mexican Joe, yes."

"Does yer trust him?"

"Why not?"

"Cap'n, I never trusts a man from across the Rio Grande, onless I has hed reason ter know it kin be done."

"He and Texas have given us some pleasant even-ings in camp with their music and singing."

"Waal, yas, they has, but somehow I kinder allus thinks o' Injun warwhoops and coyote yelps when I hears them singin'."

"You are hard, indeed, to please, Harry," said Mildmay, with a smile.

"I allus speak of a man as I find him, cap'n, and

I'll jist wait ter see how these pan out before I sings the'r praises.

"Now, they may be all right, only I doesn't know 'em ter be, and I hain't acquainted with 'em yet.

"If they was friends I knows and wanted fer ther trip, then I could tell yer jist what they was, and I hopes we will find these O. K. when ther horn blows fer action.

"But we was too pressed fer time ter wait for others, and it were these or no one, so they is with us, and I'm playin' a waitin' game, an' I may say, as well, a watchin' one, for my eyes are open wide."

The Englishman laughed, and replied:

"You are right, Harry, and I see that I have the right man in you, so feel every confidence."

"I has been tried, cap'n, and Buffalo Bill vouched fer me, and he hain't given ter puttin' his word on one who will back down when death calls him to ther front ter hand in his chips; but does yer know I doesn't half-like the signs I sees about?"

"What kind of signs, Harry?"

"Injun signs."

"Ah! you think that there are Indians about?"

"I knows it."

"How so?"

"I has crossed two trails, one going east, t'other west, and they was some five miles apart.

"Now, I hain't seen thet Texan and Greaser show thet they seen 'em yet, and one trail was made by fully forty ponies and t'other by fifty."

"You are sure they were Indian trails?"

"Sartin, for ther ponies was not shod."

"Ah! but there comes the Texan."

As Mildmay spoke the Texan came up from the rear at a gallop and said:

"Pard, I saw a trail some miles back of some forty ponies going east, and another just now of half-a-hundred bound west, and I believe they will circle round, meet and ambush us."

"You is right, Texas, thet is jist what they'll do, so you and Mexico Joe move out ahead on ther flanks, and see ef yer kin git onter the'r hidin'-place."

The Texan gave a signal to his Mexican companion, and the two started ahead, keeping a space of half-a-mile between them.

They soon disappeared from view, but an hour after they came back at a gallop, and the Texan reported the Indians, about a hundred strong, ambushed in a cedar thicket through which the trail ran, and added:

"By flankin' to the right, sir, we can give them the slip and keep on a ridge, where we can make a good stand if attacked."

"We will take the ridge," quietly replied Old Harry, while Mildmay, with a smile of triumph, said, in a low tone:

"They have been put to the test, and did not fail us, Harry, while they are as cool as icicles."

"Wait until bullets fly, and see then," was the muttered response.

When the little party flanked off to the right, to gain the rocky ridge and leave the cedar thicket a mile away to the left, Old Harry quickly formed his men in marching order.

The pack-horses were fastened together in single file, the led-horses following them, the wrangler leading and the hustler bringing up the rear.

The cook carried swung to his saddle on either side extra rifles and ammunition, and his duty was to load for the others as they needed the weapons.

In the front rode Old Harry, and for his companion he took the Mexican, while to bring up the rear was Mildmay, with Texas as his pard.

When they reached the rise they saw the thicket of cedars ahead, and all looked serene there, as though no danger lurked in their depths.

But this quietness lasted only for a moment, for, seeing that the party had left the trail and were avoiding them, they knew that their presence there was either known or suspected, and that they must reveal themselves.

This they did with sudden yells and a dash out of the thicket, directly across the valley and up toward the rocky ridge.

They were seen to be well mounted, though their ponies had a jaded look, and they were about four-score in number.

"Open with your long-range rifles, pards, take good aim, and don't waste no bullets by puttin' two in one Injun where one will do ther biz.

"As we will halt here ter fire, all but ther cook kin chip in in ther powder and lead music.

"When they reaches yonder rocks, open fire, for I'll start ther ball," and Old Harry glanced at the men with something of anxiety in his look, for, as he had said, they were "an unknown quantity."

His glance revealed Mildmay seated upright in his saddle, a repeating rifle in his hands, ready to open fire.

His face was serene, his eyes sparkling with the prospect of battle.

Texas and Mexican Joe were none the less cool, and looked like men to whom the art of killing their fellows was by no means new.

The wrangler and the hustler were ready, too, no anxiety being shown by either, while the cook was prepared to load weapons as fast as they were handed to him.

On came the redskins at a run, their yells echoing against the ridge, and their appearance most dangerous, as in such heavy force they rushed down the slope, to then ascend the ridge and attack.

The halt had been made among some large boulders, and these protected the led horses and pack-animals from the fire of the redskins.

But promptly the rifle of Old Harry rose to his

shoulder, his horse stood as still as a statue, and with a quick aim came a puff of smoke, a report, and a bullet was sent upon its mission.

Every eye beheld how true the aim, for the chief in advance threw his hands up above his head, waved them wildly, and, before a warrior could catch him, fell in a heap from his horse, the rushing ponies passing over him.

"A long range, splendid shot—bravo!" cried Mildmay, and, as his rifle went up to his shoulder, the others did the same, including Harry's once more.

Six shots rang out almost together, and as many deadly bullets went on their errands.

Here and there a horse went down, and a brave toppled from his saddle, as the rifles rattled forth death with startling rapidity.

The charging redskins had not looked for such a long-range fire, nor for repeating rifles in the hands of all their foes, and the cavalcade swayed wildly, and suddenly turned to the right about in a flying retreat.

Hot after them flew the bullets. The aim of the palefaces was deadly.

But suddenly the redskins wheeled again, and once more came on with a rush, firing as they came the few rifles they had, and also sending showers of arrows upon their foes.

One arrow struck Mildmay in the shoulder, another hit Texas in the hip, and a couple of horses fell under the redskins' fire before the terrible leaden hail poured upon them by the repeating rifles caused them to turn about as though on pivots and ride for their lives in retreat.

Then Old Harry, with Mildmay, Texas and Mexican Joe, pursued and threw bullets into the thicket so hotly that they sent the redskins flying out of there.

"Come, pards, it's ten miles to a camp where we kin be safe for ther night, and we'll git thar, though I does not believe them reds will foller us.

"Yer see we has hit them hard, and our long-range rifles keeps them away off, so they has about all they wishes.

"Pards, I is glad ter see yer has smelt powder afore and hain't afeerd o' ther music made by flyin' lead," and he looked particularly at Texas and Mexican Joe as he spoke.

The slight wounds received by Major Mildmay and Texas were speedily dressed, and then at a quickened pace the party held along the ridge for several miles, descended into a valley and camped on a small stream, where they were splendidly protected against attack, and could beat off twenty redskins to one if they made another charge upon them.

But night came on and not a redskin had been seen to be following on their trail.

CHAPTER VI.
ON THE TRAIL.

Buffalo Bill picked his men.

He picked his horses as well, for he knew what was before him.

The scouts he selected were all a splendid lot of fellows, rough riders, dead shots, of iron physique, and possessed in the fullest sense of true courage.

Any one of them had records of daring deeds and fierce encounters.

The men were all splendidly mounted, several extra horses were carried along, and pack-horses were supplied with all provisions and equipments needed for the long trail, which might extend to months.

The party rode away from the fort early on the morning set for their start, and took the trail southward to Fort Wingate.

There a stop was to be made of a day, for rest and to get ready for pushing on into the country where they would find no white men, no succor, and have to face the deadliest of dangers.

They expected, of course, to find at the old Mormon fort the party of Mildmay, three days' ride from Fort Wingate, and then they would have their force increased by seven good men.

Arriving at Fort Wingate, Buffalo Bill reported to the commanding officer, and delivered a letter from General Miles.

"Well, Cody, I am glad to see you, but I cannot say that I am glad to see you going upon this expedition, for I consider it foolhardy in the extreme," said Colonel Baldwin, in welcoming the scout.

"You consider it more hazardous now, sir, than before?"

"Yes, for the Indians are in a very ugly humor, and you are going into a bad land.

"Mildmay passed north of here some fifty miles, but sent a scout with a letter to me. I returned my opinion of the expedition. I told him of the danger, unless a force of soldiers were sent large enough to fight off the redskins. This force had already been refused by him, for he says that he will risk no body of soldiers on his mission, only take those he can personally secure for value received, save in your case, Cody."

"I believe, sir, I would be better pleased to have a force of soldiers with us, but yet if we cannot fight we can retreat."

"Yes; I am only satisfied to see the party go as you are to be the leader; but General Miles suggests, out of compliment to the British officer, if for nothing else, I send any officer who cares to volunteer to go, along with a sergeant and six men, and that will augment your force materially."

"It will, sir, and I will be glad to have the increased force."

"But remember, Cody, the officer who goes is merely an honorary escort to Major Mildmay, as a British soldier, and will no more have command than does the Englishman, for you are the leader, though, of course, you will consult with any officer who accompanies you."

"Have you thought of any one, Colonel Baldwin?"

"Well, I know one who would gladly volunteer, for he is a daring fellow, a splendid soldier and an experienced Indian-fighter, young as he is.

"He belongs to the infantry, it is true, but he is as fine a rider as there is in the cavalry, and is, further, a friend and admirer of yours."

"I was going to suggest Lieutenant Robert F. Ames, sir."

"The very man I had in mind.

"I am glad you are pleased with my selection.

"Orderly!"

The orderly appeared, and was sent to request the presence of Lieutenant Robert Ames at headquarters.

He soon appeared, a handsome young man, with true soldierly bearing, expressive, determined face and the eye of an eagle.

He saluted his superior officer and shook hands cordially with Buffalo Bill.

"Mr. Ames, I sent for you to ask how you would like to go upon a very hazardous expedition, with a very small force?"

"I should be delighted, sir, especially as I believe Buffalo Bill is to be the guide and scout," promptly answered the officer.

"He is to do so; in fact, he will command, while you will go as escort, representing the army."

"Nothing could please me more, sir."

"Remember, it is a very perilous trail that you take."

"I am ready, sir."

"Select a sergeant and six men to accompany you, and be ready to depart day after to-morrow."

* * * * *

"Well, Cody, have you decided which trail to take from here?"

"I'll tell the situation exactly, lieutenant," and Buffalo Bill dismounted from his horse in camp, where Lieutenant Ames, his soldiers and most of the scouts, had halted for the night, their second day out from the fort.

The position was upon a hilltop, well wooded and with a stream at its base, a rare thing to find in that almost waterless country.

"Well, out with it, Bill," and Lieutenant Ames lighted his pipe and leaned back against a tree to listen.

"By going north, sir, we would cross the trail of Mildmay and his party, and follow it on to Maroni;

but that would take us almost a day's ride out of our way."

"And accomplish nothing?"

"Well, it would show us whether they had gone along or not."

"You think there is any doubt of their having done so?"

"I do not, and yet you know the best laid plans miscarry in this country."

"Very true; but now to the other trail?"

"We can reach the old fort by to-morrow night, sir, for you see the snow-clad peaks of San Francisco Mountains ahead of us now."

"And the water?"

"We cross a couple of streams during the day, sir."

"And the other trail?"

"We are most likely to run upon a band of redskins."

"And that would delay our joining Mildmay?"

"It might, sir."

"Well, I should say push right on to-morrow to Fort Maroni, and if the party are there we are all right, and if not we can either wait their coming, or go out to meet them; but do as you deem best in the matter."

"They should be there, sir; yes, several days ago, and it is my opinion to push on for the old fort to-morrow, and there decide what is best should the Mildmay party not be there."

"We have not seen any Indians thus far, and I trust Mildmay has been as fortunate."

"They have been, sir, unless they have run upon a roving band of redskins, prowling or hunting."

"But Old Harry is as good a scout and guide as they could have, and I feel no anxiety for them as long as he is the leader."

"Yes, I know the man, and he is a good one; but what force has Mildmay?"

"Seven, all told."

"And you have eight scouts with you, nine all told, while I have a sergeant, corporal and eight men, so that, altogether, we number twenty-six. A very respectable force, after all, and we need hardly fear the redskins at ten to one against us."

"Not with our new repeating, long-range rifles, sir, and many of us have extra ones that will count in a hot fight, lieutenant."

"Indeed, they will, Cody," answered the handsome young officer, and soon after supper was announced by the cook, and the lieutenant and Buffalo Bill messed together.

The night passed without any alarm, the sentinels seeing nothing more dangerous than prowling coyotes, and the mount was made at dawn, a ten-mile march being made before breakfast.

San Francisco Mountains loomed up grandly now ahead and to the right, and the horses were kept at

an easy trot to reach the old Maroni fort before nightfall.

Sweeping through a narrow valley, while the sun was yet an hour high, the party came out into the plain surrounded by a lofty range, the mountains on the right hand towering far up into the clouds.

The plain was treeless and extended to the foot hills on one side, the mountains on the other, while there was a stream not far distant.

In the center of this large plain was a group of log cabins, surrounded by a stockade wall, and this was Fort Maroni, the one-time halting-place of Brigham Young and his followers on their march up into Utah.

Buffalo Bill was in advance, and by his side was Lieutenant Ames, and both looked eagerly toward the old deserted fort to see some sign of those whom they had come there to join.

But no horses were staked out to graze, no smoke circled up from the chimney, and all was still in the old Mormon resting-place.

The Mildmay party under the guidance of Old Harry had not arrived, yet were days overdue.

When they realized that the old fort was unoccupied, that those they had expected to find there were not visible, Buffalo Bill and Lieutenant Ames, in their anxiety, rode forward at a gallop.

For once the scout forgot his caution in his desire to find out why their friends were not there, and not until they dashed into the stockade gate did Buffalo Bill realize his mistake and cry out:

"That time I acted rashly, for suppose an ambush had been waiting for us; but they are not here, lieutenant."

"No."

"And have not been."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes, for they would have left some sign for us had they been."

"They have been delayed."

"By Indians, doubtless; but I hope that they have been able to stand them off."

"Well, they may get in to-night, but should they not do so?"

"We can do but one thing."

"And what is that?"

"Go on the hunt for them."

"I am ready."

"No, lieutenant, I will go with six of my men, and you had better remain here to strengthen up the old post and guard the stores."

"I will leave two of my men with you, and if we have to retreat we have you to fall back on."

"And where will you go?"

"On the trail that Old Harry and myself decided they should travel."

"If they have not been wiped out we will meet

them within a day or two's ride or corralled somewhere fighting off the redskins."

"If the redskins are in force?"

"I'll dash in with my scouts, sir, and should we not return within five days, you can take our trail and come to our support, and a second coming of reinforcements I am sure will convince the Indians that a larger force is at hand, and cause them to move off."

"You know best, Bill, and I will be guided by your judgment, but I hope that Mildmay and his men will come in to-night, or that you will meet them to-morrow."

"I hope so, sir, but it looks bad to me, this not finding them here."

"And you lay it all to Indians?"

"I am not so sure of that, sir."

"You are aware that the missing of several gold-hunting parties is attributed to a band of gold robbers, who make the rounds of the mining-camps and hang upon the trails?"

"Yes, sir; I have seen them and met them."

"I'd like to get a chance at them now, with you and your scouts along, Cody."

"I hope that we may, sir; but, lieutenant, have you ever heard any rumors of the Skeleton Scout?"

"Have I not, Bill?"

"Why, he has been the talk of the camps at times."

"Does any one know who or what he is?"

"My idea is that he is some crazy wild man who hangs about the trails, perhaps some gold-hunter who has been crazed in his search for gold, or by finding it, but is harmless."

"How does he subsist, sir?"

"Ah! that is the question."

"What do you think, Bill?"

"I do not know, sir, just what to think, though I hope we may find him this trip."

"It would be a feather in our cap, surely; but here come the men."

The force now came up, and disappointment, mingled with anxiety at not finding the other party there, was upon every face.

The order was given to go into regular camp. The log-cabins furnished good quarters for the men, while within the stockade wall and on the plain surrounding it the grass was long and juicy, with water near at hand.

For some reason the wild animals did not frequent the deserted fort of the Mormons, leaving it as desolate and alone as the little fenced-in plot, shaded by a *pinon* tree, where were the graves of the Mormons who had died there.

CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT.

Feeling comparatively secure in the old fort, only two sentinels were placed on duty that night, one at each entrance to the stockade, and on the outside, where their eyes could take in the sweep of the plain in every direction.

The stockade was some three acres in size, and the horses, being allowed to graze within walls, were safe.

One of the sentinels was a soldier, the other a scout.

Time passed away, the soldier ever and anon arousing himself, as from instinct, to glance about him.

At last something seemed to arouse him, but what he did not know.

He appeared to feel a human presence near.

He still kept his position, with his back against the stockade, his eyes wide open, his senses all acute.

Then, the presence which he had felt, he saw.

Not far from him on the plain, visible in the starlight—the stars shine brightly there, and the air is clear as crystal—he beheld a form.

Could he believe his eyes that he beheld what appeared to him to be a skeleton form?

He gazed in horror upon it.

He saw the white skull, the skeleton form, the arms, the legs, all, and with painful, startling distinctness.

Was it a dream, or was he awake?

It must be some hideous nightmare, for surely a skeleton form like that could not walk the earth.

He stood like one transfixed, unable to move.

But at last he felt that he must move, he must shake himself together, must see if he were sleeping or waking.

With a mighty effort, he made a move and stood upright.

Then he brought his rifle to a "ready," and still stood staring at the weird object.

"I am surely awake," he said, and he spoke aloud.

His voice seemed hoarse and strange to him.

Then he coughed, and watched the result.

The skeleton form stood still, silent and motionless.

"Halt! who comes there?" suddenly rang out in the soldier's deepest tones, and the answer promptly came:

"The dead!"

And then was uttered a wild cry that caused the camp to rally in alarm, and Buffalo Bill and Lieutenant Ames to hasten to the soldier's post of duty.

Buffalo Bill was the first to reach the stockade barrier, and, rifle in hand he leaped over it, and beheld the sentinel prostrate upon the ground.

Lieutenant Ames was close upon his heels, and,

as the scout glanced about him, he beheld the officer, while the others were running to positions to fight off an attack.

The scout who was the other sentinel called out: "All quiet here!" so that the interest all centered upon the position occupied by the soldier.

That he was dead, when he saw him prostrate upon the ground Buffalo Bill certainly believed, and he glanced about for his slayer, while Lieutenant Ames knelt by the side of the man.

"Bill, he is not dead, for he is rallying."

"See to him, please, lieutenant, while I take a scout around the stockade," said Cody, and he at once walked away in the darkness, then halted and called out:

"One of the scouts bring me my horse in all haste."

Then to the lieutenant he added, as his eyes were gazing over the plain:

"I certainly saw a form flying along yonder, and I will pursue as far as I dare."

The lieutenant would have checked him, but just then a scout dashed up with his horse, and, throwing himself into the saddle, Buffalo Bill rode like the wind, calling out:

"Tell several to follow me, Lasso Bill."

While the scout addressed, the one who had brought his horse, ran back to the stockade to obey. Buffalo Bill rode on in the direction in which he had seen the fleeting form.

The motion of his horse rendered his gaze unsteady, but he distinctly saw a form ahead going at great speed over the plain.

He was not far from the shadows at the base of the mountains, and, strange to say, was flying along directly for the little white fence that enclosed the graves of the Mormons buried there.

On sped the scout, urging his horse to his utmost, and the splendid animal, fleet as a deer, was gaining upon the flying form, fast as it was running.

Gazing more fixedly at it as he approached nearer, and confident that he could overtake it, the scout was surprised at what he saw.

It seemed to him that the one who was running away from him wore a snowy garment, almost misty in its texture, and he saw what appeared to be a weird, greenish, spectral light seeming to hover about it.

He could have opened fire with his rifle, but wished to capture the fugitive alive.

Nearer and nearer the fugitive and pursuer approached the shadows of the hills, and Buffalo Bill began to realize how much he was risking in the way of being led into an ambush, so determined to call a halt.

"Halt! or I fire!" he cried in a voice that rang out over the plain, penetrating far beyond the ears of the fugitive.

Almost instantly the shadowy form halted, turned about and threw its arms above its head, while sepulchral tones came the words:

"Hold, Buffalo Bill! you follow Death!"

Hardly had the scout in his amazement heard the words, when his eyes fell upon and beheld the white outline of a skeleton, the bones being marked with a spectral glare that rendered them distinctly visible. Involuntarily he had drawn hard upon his rein, but just as he did so his horse went down heavily, hurling him far over his head, so unexpected was his fall.

The scout, agile as a panther though he was, was unable to catch himself, or break his fall, and he fell heavily, striking so hard that the breath was momentarily knocked from his body, and his head received a severe blow that partially stunned him.

Passing his hand across his brow several times, seemed to bring back his senses, and he saw his horse standing silent not far distant, as though he was ashamed of falling.

Then his mind flashed upon the fugitive form, and turning quickly toward the spot where he had last seen it he discovered that it was gone.

At this instant there came the rapid clatter of hoofs, and up dashed several scouts at full speed.

Halting by the side of their chief, they saw that he rose with difficulty, as though severely hurt.

"Are you wounded, chief? We heard no shot!"

"No, only a fall, for my horse went down into something, and I am anxious to discover what it is."

"You are hurt, sir."

"Oh, no, merely a bad shakeup, and the fall has stunned me."

"The ground is soft, and I will not feel any bad effects from it," and Buffalo Bill walked over to the spot where his horse had fallen.

There he beheld a deep, narrow hole in the ground.

"It is a grave and open," he said, thoughtfully, and then he glanced about him and continued:

"It was just in my trail, too, and my horse got his forefoot into it without seeing it."

"There is no dirt near it, that having been taken away, and it was not recently dug, either."

"But it's a grave, sir," said Lasso Bill.

"Yes, and I saw the body that belongs in it," said the scout, impressively.

"You saw the body, chief?" asked the scouts together.

Buffalo Bill laughed, and replied:

"Do you see yonder white fence?"

"Yes, sir."

"It incloses some graves, and the one I followed was running for that place, and led me across the open grave yonder."

"My horse fell into it, and when I got my senses I saw that my ghost was gone."

"Your ghost, chief?"

"Call it what you please, Lasso Bill, but I saw the skeleton Scout."

The three scouts started at this.

They knew their chief too well to feel that he could joke about a serious subject.

They had all heard of the Skeleton Scout, and had eyed the idea that there was such an object.

But now their chief told them that he had seen the Skeleton Scout, and they were more than interested.

In a few words he told them just what he had beheld, and added: "To follow further now would be useless, and, besides, we might run into an ambush and be shot down."

"To-morrow we will have a hunt for the Skeleton Scout, taking his trail."

"Now we will go back to the fort, and, mark my words, that sentinel saw what I did."

He mounted his horse, though still bruised by the fall, and the party rode back to the stockade.

Lieutenant Ames was with the soldier sentinel, who had now returned to consciousness, and he called out:

"He fainted, Cody, and it was hard to fetch him around. His brain must be affected, for he says that he saw a ghost."

"He did see one, Lieutenant Ames."

"A phantom form that haunts the trails in this country, lieutenant. It is known as the Skeleton Scout."

"Oh, yes, I have heard of such a form."

"That was it, sir, for I saw his skeleton form distinctly," cried the soldier, and he added:

"Yes, sir; yes, it was a spirit from spirit land."

"It was a spirit from a distillery, Watkins, and you surrounded too much of it."

"I thought you had given up drinking," said Lieutenant Ames, sternly.

"I have, sir, for I never touch liquor now."

"No, lieutenant, he did see what he says, for I also saw it, and chased a phantom, as I know to my cost."

"He led my horse over an open grave, directly over the Mormon burying-ground, and I had a fall at I still suffer from."

"When I called halt, it turned, raised its arms and beheld by the aid of some spectral light, a skeleton form, while I heard the words, in answer to my command:

"'You follow Death, Buffalo Bill.'"

"Ha! it called you by name?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you make of it, Cody?"

"That it is the one who is masquerading as the skeleton Scout."

"Doubtless; but for what purpose?"

"That is to be seen, sir, as we continue our trail."

Turning quickly to the soldier, in his frank-

hearted way, ever ready to acknowledge a wrong, Lieutenant Ames said:

"I am sorry I wronged you, Watkins, and beg your pardon."

"It's granted, sir, and I do not wonder that you doubted me, for ghosts are not seen often, and I don't care to meet with another one, for it unnerved me completely, sir."

"I tried to give an alarm, as I gazed upon it, then my brain grew dizzy and I knew no more."

"Chief Cody, I thank you, sir, for vouching for it that what I saw was really a skeleton form."

"Well, Watkins, forget it now, and go to your blankets, for I will put another man in your place," and, having made the detail, Lieutenant Ames walked off with Buffalo Bill, and when the two were alone together he asked:

"What does it mean, Bill?"

Buffalo Bill did not immediately answer the question of Lieutenant Ames.

"Lieutenant, you know that I no more believe in superstition than you do."

"Very true, Cody."

"To say that what I saw was a ghost, or a skeleton form, would be ridiculous, for such could not be."

"None of those whom I have ever seen die, none of the brave fellows whom I saw fall, and all that are now in their graves, friends or foes, have ever come back to me in spirit form, unless, perhaps, in a dream, so I know that there is no use in believing that the dead can come back to us."

"Yet you saw a skeleton form?"

"Ah, yes, and a perfect one, as far as I could see."

"The skeleton was making tracks for his grave evidently," said Lieutenant Ames, laughingly.

"Maybe he was; but we'll see by his trail to-morrow morning."

"You expect to trail your ghost then, Cody?"

"Oh, yes, ghosts that prowl nowadays leave tracks."

"But you challenged him?"

"Yes, sir; and he replied to me."

"How do ghosts' voices sound?"

"Somewhat sepulchral, sir; certainly the one I heard had a warning in it."

"And he knew you?"

"Yes, sir."

"But now tell me what you make out of this strange appearance?"

"It is some one masquerading for a purpose that I am determined to find out, sir, and I will begin in the morning," was the scout's reply, and Lieutenant Ames rejoined:

"That means that a ghost is to be captured, for when you speak in that tone you will do all you set out to perform."

"Now let us see if we can get a few hours' more sleep, without having our rest broken by prowling

ghosts," and the two friends were soon fast asleep again.

The scouts and soldiers had quickly given up guying the sentinel after hearing Buffalo Bill's report, and they turned in for some sleep, while the poor fellow who had been so alarmed, did not find it an easy matter to close his eyes in slumber.

The night passed away without any more disturbance, and, after an early breakfast, Buffalo Bill mounted his horse to go on his search for Mildmay and his party.

With Lieutenant Ames and Lasso Bill, who were to remain at the fort, he first went in search of the Skeleton Scout's trail.

The soldier pointed out just where he had stood when he had seen him, and then closely looked over the ground.

But not the trace of a trail was found.

Then they followed along the trail left by Buffalo Bill's horse, and halted when it reached the open grave.

There were the marks where the animal had fallen, his fore feet just breaking in the edge, but no other tracks were visible.

There was no loose dirt about the grave, which had evidently been dug some time before, perhaps a year or more.

From the grave they went to the little inclosure, and the white headboards, put there by the Mormons, were read over.

The inside of the little fence had become overgrown with weeds and some trees, yet they afforded no hiding-place for any one there, and a glance revealed that no one could take refuge there and not be seen.

The graves were grass-grown, and neglected for a long while.

Not the slightest trail could be found from there of man or beast, and Buffalo Bill said:

"I'll leave you, lieutenant, with Bill, to hunt for the ghost's trail, while I push on with my pards to try and find the Mildmay party.

"If you do not hear of us, sir, in three days, please send Lasso Bill and several more of the men, and follow as we agreed upon, after a short while, with the balance of the force, following our trail."

"Good-by, and luck to you," said the lieutenant, and Buffalo Bill rode rapidly on after his four scouts, who had gone ahead.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEATH ROLL.

The chief of scouts swiftly rode on, following his four men who had preceded, for he had told them the trail he intended to take.

Duty demanded that he should go on at once in search of Mildmay's party.

Yet he had longed to solve the mystery of the Skeleton Scout, and must leave that apparition, or whatever it might be, behind him, with the hope that Lieutenant Ames and Lasso Bill might find out what it was.

The fact that the Mildmay party had not arrived at the fort told him that something was wrong, that more than an ordinary cause had prevented their coming, when they had such a guide as was Old Harry.

"If they were delayed from any ordinary reason Old Harry would surely have sent a courier on to let me know, or if in danger, one to ask for help if he could reach me.

"Come, pards, we must strike a swifter pace than this," he called out as he overtook the four scouts.

The scouts held steadily on until night, when Buffalo Bill called a halt.

At dawn they were again in the saddle, and before noon came to some woodland, where there was a spring and plenty of grass.

Deer, antelope and wolves darted out of the timber as they came up, and sped away over the plains in alarm.

But a shot from Buffalo Bill's rifle brought down a fine antelope.

"We must meet them by night, for the delay can hardly have been beyond the *mesa* we reach by sunset," said Buffalo Bill, as they once more took the saddle, men and horses greatly refreshed and rested.

After going a few miles, the scout discovered a trail, comparatively fresh.

"Indians, and about fifty of them; see they make a turn and go the way we do."

They pushed on a little more rapidly now, for the discovery of the trail seemed to be a reason for the delay of the Mildmay party.

When the sun was yet an hour high they ascended a range, and the sight that met their gaze caused the bronzed face of Buffalo Bill to turn pale, for a glance seemed to indicate that they had found their party—dead!

The spot they had come upon was a clump of timber in a valley through which swept a brook of clearest water.

In the timber there was the evidence of a camp as the scouts approached, and, spurring forward, they had come upon the scene that had so startled them all. Buffalo Bill believed he had found the ones he was in search of, but found them dead.

There was the camp, the evidence of a bitter struggle for life among fallen trees and boulders.

As the scouts approached a large band of coyotes went whining away, while buzzards and crows flew to distant trees.

Horses lay about here and there dead, but stripped of saddles, bridles or packs, and in a line be-

yond, where a charge had been made, over a score of Indian ponies were stretched out over the plain for a mile or more.

But this was not the worst that the scouts gazed upon, for there were the bodies of seven men upon the field, huddled in a little inclosure, where they had made a temporary fort to defend their lives.

Here, too, was a shattered rifle-butt, a broken bit, a torn blanket and other things that could only have belonged to the paleface party.

The bodies lay within a space of half-an-acre in size, and they were so torn by the teeth of the wolves and the beaks of the buzzards as to be wholly unrecognizable.

They had been stripped of their clothing, and were simply torn to pieces.

"There were seven in Mildmay's party, and here are seven bodies, while each one has been scalped, that is evident.

"See this long lock of gray hair—it came from the head of poor Old Harry, and is stained with blood.

"Yes, pards, they were overwhelmed by numbers, and were wiped out entirely.

"This is a pitiful story to tell, a sad report to go back to England.

"But this time the redskins have struck too big game, and Mildmay will be fearfully avenged."

So said the scout, as he sat upon his horse, gazing sadly upon the scene that met his vision.

The scouts were silent, and, like their chief, sat with uncovered heads, looking upon the scene, their faces pale and stern.

"Yonder we will camp, pards, and one of you must stand guard over these bodies, that they be not more mutilated than they are.

"A few fires built around will keep the coyotes off to-night, I guess."

"And show the redskins our camp, I fear, sir," said a scout.

"No danger of that, for redskins seldom return to a scene like this, and the condition of the bodies shows that they have been dead for several days.

"We will camp here, bury the dead, and await the coming of Lieutenant Ames and the others.

"To-morrow I will take the trail of the Indians, and track them to their village, and Lieutenant Ames can send to the fort the report, and ask for a force with which to pursue the redskins, for it must follow this deed, and be quick and merciless, to make a lesson of it that they will not forget."

The scout led the way to the camping-place, the horses were staked out, fires built round the fatal camp, and a scout sentinel went on duty to guard the bodies, while the others slept.

When morning came the sentinel aroused the little camp, breakfast was cooked and the men all adjourned to the camp of the dead and began the sad

task of digging graves, in which to place the remains.

Buffalo Bill did not work at the grave-digging, but went over the field quietly, and from body to body.

At length he came up to the others at a quickstep, and cried:

"Pards, I have made a discovery!"

The face of the chief of scouts showed that the discovery he had made was an important one.

It was seldom that so much excitement was revealed in his stern, handsome face.

"Pards, I shirked work at the graves this morning to look about me, for somehow matters did not look the same in the broad glare of day to me that they did in the dusk of evening.

"Now, Gerard, look well at that first body in the line there, and tell me just what you think of it?"

The bodies had been brought and placed in a line not far from the graves, and Gerard at once walked toward the one indicated, and gazed fixedly at it for a while.

Then he said:

"This was one of Old Harry's men, sir."

"Well?"

"He was a Mexican, I take it."

"Yes, there is no doubt of that, as that small space of skin, his size and hair indicate.

"Now, Frank, what of the others?"

The scout addressed gazed fixedly at the second body in line, and said:

"Red meat, certain."

"Pards, Injun it was born, Injun it died."

And so continued the criticisms.

"Now, this is the body supposed to be that of Mildmay.

"Take a close look at it, pards," said Buffalo Bill.

"You said, chief, the Britisher was a big man?"

"Yes, Gerard; weighed about two hundred."

"This was a big man."

"Yes, and Mildmay was six feet tall."

"So is this man, sir."

"Well, this is a white man," said Frank.

"Oh, yes, and about the best fraud that they tried to perpetrate upon us. It is not Mildmay."

The four scouts looked at their chief for an explanation.

After a moment of thought, Buffalo Bill replied:

"My opinion is just this, pards:

"The Mildmay party were attacked at this place, and, without doubt, captured, while some of them may have been killed.

"Old Harry brought white men with him, not Indians, and yet these bodies have been placed here to represent the Mildmay party.

"There are some things that show they were here, as that is the butt of a gun Mildmay showed me, and the broken bowie-knife belonged to Old Harry, as I well know.

"Now, Indians were the attacking force here, but I am sure that they were led by renegade whites, who left traces to show that only Indians were concerned."

"And the Mildmay party, chief?"

"Are either prisoners, or dead," responded Buffalo Bill.

The words of the chief of scouts set the four men to thinking, and the more they conned over the matter the more certain they became that Buffalo Bill had struck the keynote of the situation.

They at once began to look over the whole affair, judged from his standpoint, and it came upon them in many ways that the death camp had been as Frank said, "doctored" to cause a belief that the Mildmay party had been attacked by Indians and wiped out.

A closer inspection of the bodies proved that in each case the hair had been cut away, not by coyotes, and this same doctoring with knives was shown in each case, while the positions being examined, all tended to reveal work that had been artificial, not the result of being killed in battle.

A horse, which Old Harry had shown Buffalo Bill at the little town, and had belonged to Major Mildmay, was recognized among the dead animals by the scout, and a blood-stained handkerchief, tied in a knot as though bound about a wound in the head, was picked up near it, and bore the crest of the Englishman.

The men, having scattered, going singly in their search, came together again at the unfinished graves just at noon.

The chief was there, and each one of them gave the result of their searching and thinking over the matter in the light let upon it by Buffalo Bill.

To a man they agreed that Buffalo Bill was right, and they so told him, giving all their reasons for doing so.

"Well, pards, I thought when you looked more closely into the matter you would decide as I have; but we will now bury these dead bodies, and make a camp at another point."

"To await the lieutenant's coming, sir?"

"Well, no, for he is about where I wished him, I think, and one of you must return to Fort Maroni and ask him to remain there until I can give him further information."

"I will go, sir," said Frank.

"All right; start, and you will head him off before he gets far from the fort."

"You have formed your opinion about this matter, sir, I can see, so what shall I tell the lieutenant?" Frank said.

"Tell him, simply, that we came upon a camp of seven dead men and a number of horses, so fixed as to attempt to make us believe that it was the Mildmay party.

"We take the trail of the redskins when you start to join him, so as to follow them to their village.

"When I have done so, I will report to him, for him either to come on with the force at Maroni, or send to the fort for a large number of troops, as may be deemed best after we know the situation.

"The redskins left here in a score of different bands."

"Then that throws us off the scent?"

"Oh, no; follow one, pards, for all those trails lead to a certain point and come together there."

"I guess you are right, chief, and you certainly have a way of looking through and through anything; they just divided to throw off any pursuit."

"Hoping to put us at fault."

"But they did not expect Buffalo Bill would be on the trail," said Frank, with genuine admiration for his chief.

Mounting once more, they again pushed on, and so it continued for two days, finding the camps of those they followed, and invariably at the night-halts a grave or two.

The tracks also of the paleface prisoners were seen at each camping-place, and Buffalo Bill felt more and more certain that when the retreat of the redskins was found there would Mildmay, Old Harry and some of their companions also.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIDNIGHT APPARITION.

The trail of the retreating Indians had led the scouts in a northwestern direction, and on a line that would bring them to the Colorado River near Lee's Ferry.

Buffalo Bill was aware that the country to the west was wild, and it was said even uninhabited by Indians. It bordered the grand cañons of the Colorado.

Beyond the river were the Kaibal Mountains, also unknown, yet there a tribe of Indians were said to dwell.

To the westward, not as far away from his position then, as it was at the fatal camp, lay Fort Maroni, the white tops of the San Francisco Mountains being visible far in the distance.

So far there had not been an Indian seen, save those buried in the graves along the trail, or any fresh trails left by them.

The nature of the country was against their roving, as only here and there was it watered and wooded, and a blade of grass could be found. This rendered traveling a hardship and game very scarce, and scalps or game was what the redskins wanted on their prowling expeditions.

The night camp was made up a cañon, at a point somewhat well known to-day as the Navaho Spring, a stream so copious that it caused quite a little brook

to come flowing down to the plains, where it lost itself in the sands.

Beneath the shadows of red cliffs thousands of feet in height, the scouts went into camp, just where those they pursued had made their encampment, and a glance about them revealed that there had been a large encampment there.

"The other trails meet here, chief," said one of the scouts, as his eyes fell upon several trails leading to that point.

"It was just as I supposed; they divided to throw pursuers off and put them at fault, and this was their rendezvous, I suppose—this and the ferry across the Colorado," answered Buffalo Bill.

Here, as in the other camps, the same tracks were seen, and up in the cañon a few hundred yards new-made graves were found.

As in the other cases, that they might know just what the graves contained, the scouts threw out the soft earth.

They found here half-a-dozen bodies, and all were Indians.

"Well, pards, from the dead they buried the Mildmay party made a killing fight of it, and did splendidly."

"They did, indeed, for these make eleven bodies we have found, not to speak of the seven they tried to play on us as Mildmay and his men," Gerard responded.

"And there are more trails that have graves along them, too, which we have missed—yes, Mildmay and his men rendered a good account of themselves, though I cannot yet see an explanation for their having been taken alive."

"Yes, chief, I only wish they had been, for then we have a chance to rescue them; but we have seen only dead Navahoes, and if they have been taken prisoners up into their country it will be a miracle if we get them out."

"It will not be play to do so, Ernest! But we can let the horses loose to-night, as they cannot go far, or get away, and I do not think a watch is necessary, as we will sleep back up the cañon a short distance, so we all can get a good night's rest."

The scouts were more than willing for this arrangement, and smoked their pipes after supper, wrapped themselves in their blankets and lay down to sleep.

What caused Buffalo Bill to awake he never knew, for there was no sound he was certain, and he seemed to feel that there was a presence near him, a presence other than that of his comrades.

It was a starlight night, and he could readily see the towering cliffs, the shadows in the cañon, the willow trees fringing the banks of the little stream, and his comrades lying near.

He heard a snort and then another, as though the horses just above had been startled, and ere he could

divine the cause, which he attributed to a mountain lion, there glided past him a form, going like the wind.

He raised his rifle, but before he could use it the form was gone.

But he had recognized the apparition of old Fort Maroni—the Skeleton Scout.

"Pards, awake!"

There was something in the tones of Buffalo Bill's voice that brought the three scouts to their feet at once.

"Pards, I just saw the Skeleton Scout again."

They looked about them in an awed kind of way, and then at their chief.

"What awakened me I do not know, but I felt some one near."

"It was not a dream, chief?" said Bony, the oldest scout.

"No, Bony; I was as wide awake then as I am now."

"But suddenly there glided by me a form, and it went at great speed."

"I stooped for my rifle, and yet before I could raise it, the man had disappeared."

"How far off was he from you, chief?"

"Do you see that trail up the cañon?"

"Yes, chief; I was sleeping across it, so that none of the horses could stray by us."

"Well, the apparition passed along that trail, and leaped over you, Bony."

"Oh, Lord! that settles me," and the scout seemed to feel a mysterious dread of evil befalling him.

"No more than it does me and the rest of us, Bony."

"What kind of a looking object was it, chief?"

"It was the Skeleton Scout."

"Lordy! the one you saw at Fort Maroni?"

"Yes, for I saw his white skeleton form distinctly."

"Then the lieutenant and Lasso Bill did not capture him, as they said they would do, to show us when we meet again?"

"It would seem not, Gerard, unless there are several of these Skeleton Scouts, for I saw the same object I did that night at Fort Maroni."

"What can we do about it, chief?"

"Nothing to-night, but we will give a thorough search in the cañon in the morning, for you know it ends in the cliffs half-a-mile back from the plains."

"Shall we stand guard, chief?"

"Oh, no, for the Skeleton Scout, if alone, is not dangerous, and I think coming upon us was a surprise to him, as well as to me, to judge from the manner in which he sped away when he reached our camp."

"I only hope he will stay away," growled Gerard.

"Or come within reach of my lasso, for he is one I wish to catch alive."

"A ghost, chief?"

"Yes, Ernest, ghost or goblin, whoever or whatever it may be that is masquerading in a skeleton form," answered the chief in his determined way when much moved.

The scouts returned to their blankets again, but, excepting Buffalo Bill, none of them went to sleep immediately.

The day came without further disturbance, and the scouts were glad to have the darkness gone after the visit of the weird being of the night before.

Going down to the mouth of the cañon to look out over the plain, Buffalo Bill saw, many miles away, a long line of fog-bank, or cloud of mist, hanging over the mighty chasm that marked the course of the Colorado River, which flowed along in its bed, a thousand and more feet below.

Not a thing was visible upon the desert plain, as far as the eyes could reach, or on the brighter plateau far beyond, running back to the solid wall of carmine cliffs a couple of thousand feet in height.

Wrapped in amazement and admiration at the scene, Buffalo Bill only glanced downward as he turned to retrace his way up the cañon.

He started, as he beheld written on a large flat rock that the trail crossed, and almost at his very feet, in bold characters and in bright red letters the following inscription:

A warning from the Dead to the Living—

Go back, for this trail leads to the Land of Death.

Buffalo Bill quickly gave his signal, known so well to his men, and in a couple of minutes they stood at his side, ready for deadly work, if need be.

He silently pointed to the red warning.

They read it with wide-eyed wonder, and then Bony asked in almost a whisper:

"Will you heed it, chief?"

"For you, my pards, yes, but for myself, no, for I continue on this trail," was the determined reply of Buffalo Bill.

"You don't mean to say that you think we would desert you for that writing there on the rock, chief, even if it was written in blood, and with a skeleton finger?"

"No, indeed, we don't turn back for warnings, come from whom they may."

"We hain't lived hand-in-hand with death, chief, to be scared at a skeleton."

Buffalo Bill smiled at the earnest responses of his three brave comrades, and answered:

"No, indeed, pards; I know you too well to believe you would desert me if certain death stared you in the face; but, come, let us return and have breakfast, and then I will tell you what I mean."

They went back to the camp, ate breakfast, and when their pipes were lighted all round, Buffalo Bill said:

"Pards, you remember when we came around the

bend in these cliffs, some miles back, and glanced afar off to our left, that we saw the white peaks of San Francisco Mountains?"

All nodded in the affirmative, and the chief of scouts continued:

"At the base of the tallest peak, just beyond, on the other side, is the level plain, in the center of which stands old Fort Maroni.

"Now, I wish you three to go back to the bend in the cliffs, and from there branch out by separate trails, of your own choosing, for Fort Maroni.

"Go at a steady pace, not out of a walk, pick your best way, keep an estimate of distance and the difficulties of travel, and when you reach the fort compare notes.

"The one who has traveled the best trail and made the quickest time, will be the one to guide Lieutenant Ames and the corporal and four soldiers, with Lasso Bill and four scouts, back to this point.

"This will give a force of twelve of us, all told, including myself and the one who guides the party back here, and leave eight men still at the fort, upon which we can retreat if we have to do so."

"And you, chief?" asked Bony, who had listened with the others, most attentively.

"I will have you take my horse back with you, but bring me another one upon your return, for I must be supposed to have retreated with you.

"If I am on foot I can readily keep hiding, and my desire is to discover just who the Skeleton Scout is, and, going on to Lee's Ferry, across the Colorado River, find out if all those trails starting from the scene of the fight met there, and whither they go.

"I can do this, for I am a good walker, and get back here to meet you; but should I be delayed, just wait for me as long as Lieutenant Ames deems it best to do so, and if alive and free I will put in an appearance in time.

"Now, pards, be off, so leave me provisions enough to last me a couple of weeks, as you are going right back to the fort, where you can get more."

The provisions were quickly divided into four parts, the chief being given the lion's share, as he was to remain, and then the scouts all mounted and rode away on the back trail.

Arriving at the bend in the cliffs, where they were to part, Buffalo Bill dismounted, threw the stake line of his horse to Ernest, grasped the hand of each in farewell, and went back among the cliff cañons to start upon his effort to find the Skeleton Scout.

Buffalo Bill obtained a commanding position among the red cliffs and watched his men start upon their separate trails to the old Mormon stronghold.

"Well, they are cared for, so now to look after myself.

"I have rather a larger load, with my provisions, extra ammunition and blankets, than I care to carry,

at I must not mind that, as I will need all before my lone scout is over.

"Well, I shall reconnoiter the country thoroughly with my glass, and make my way back to the Navajo Spring to camp to-night.

"If the Skeleton Scout does not put in an appearance to-night, I will tramp to-morrow into the country beyond, or hold vigil there, being guided by circumstances as to just what to do."

So saying, Buffalo Bill leveled his field-glasses at each of the retreating forms of the scouts, seeing first one and then the other disappearing from sight. Then he carefully swept the whole country in view with the glasses, and tried to find some living being or creature, but in vain.

Not even a coyote was in view.

Then he glanced up the trail he must follow along the cliffs to the camp of the night before, and decided at once to make his way there along the summit of the cliffs, trusting to finding a way to descend to the cañon when he got to the point overhanging the springs.

It was a hard and perilous climb, up the face of a cliff a thousand feet high, but the scout had an iron nerve, a cool head and was inured to hard work.

He picked his way carefully, carrying his pack, rifle and belt of arms strapped to his back, and, after several hours of hard climbing, reached the summit.

The view was a grand one, but he surveyed it from a place of hiding, for he knew not but that some keen eye might discover him.

He was up among the clouds, up where the eagles made their home.

Feeling that he must be getting down into the cañon, near the springs, to camp there before nightfall, Buffalo Bill was about to begin the descent, when suddenly half-a-dozen mountain sheep came bounding along over the rocks.

A shot brought down a fine young animal.

Delaying to cut some choice bits of meat, Buffalo Bill did not reach the spring in the head of the cañon until the shadows began to grow black, and he started as he beheld a human form standing before him.

"You are Buffalo Bill! Up with your hands!"

Such was the greeting that Buffalo Bill heard when he came upon the form he beheld standing at the upper spring in the cañon, just where he had intended to make his camp.

"Yes, I am Buffalo Bill, and, under the circumstances, I obey you," and the scout raised his hands above his head.

He was caught at a disadvantage, for his belt of arms and rifle were strapped to the pack and roll of blankets on his back.

The one who had thus caught Buffalo Bill at a disadvantage was a man clad in border garb, with a rifle

lying on the ground at his feet, and a revolver leveled in his hand.

He was a large man, deeply bronzed by exposure, and wore a full beard and his hair long.

"So I have caught you, Buffalo Bill?" he said, with something like a sneer.

"Not knowing otherwise, it looks so to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Hold, Bony; don't kill him!"

The scout uttered the words as with a quick warning to some one standing behind his captor, and the man, with a startled exclamation, turned suddenly.

The act was fatal to his safety, for, with the bound of a panther, Buffalo Bill had sprung forward, a kick on the arm sent the revolver flying in the air, and his grip was upon the throat of his enemy.

Taken completely by surprise, in spite of his great strength, the man had more than met his match, and was borne to the ground backward, while, reaching his disengaged hand up to his pack, Buffalo Bill drew his bowie-knife, and commanded:

"Struggle, and you are a dead man.

"I mean what I say."

The man's arms relaxed, and he was quiet, and the scout instantly disarmed him by taking off his belt, and with a lariat, that he never went without, bound the arms and feet of his prisoner securely.

The tables had been turned upon him completely.

The shadows were still deepening and in a quarter of an hour more daylight would be gone, so the scout was anxious to be settled in camp before darkness came.

So he said:

"Well, pard, where is your camp?"

"I have none," was the gruff reply.

"Walking or riding?"

"I came on foot."

"May I have the pleasure of your acquaintance?"

"You don't know me?"

"Perhaps, when I see your face in a better light, I may recall you.

"We shall see; but now tell me your name."

"My name is Gabe Gurney."

"Well, Mr. Gurney, you say that you are alone. May I ask what you are doing here?"

"Prospecting."

"So you are a miner?"

"Yes."

"Any other calling?"

"No."

"I thought you had."

"Why?"

"Because you sought to rob me."

"I didn't."

"Why hold me up as you did?"

"For self-protection."

"Knowing me, you knew that no honest man has anything to fear from Buffalo Bill."

"Well, a man has to be on the safe side."

"That's why you are now my prisoner, instead of having it the other way."

"But come: are you alone? where is your camp? and are you on foot? for I wish these questions answered. If I catch you at any trickery it will go hard with you, and the appearance of any of your pards will be a signal for your death, so I can attend to them."

The scout spoke in a tone so that the prisoner saw he was not trifling, and he answered:

"I am alone, and my horse and camp are down the cañon, for I came up here hoping to get a shot at some game, when I saw you coming and waited for you."

"When did you camp there?"

"An hour ago."

"Where is your retreat?"

"What do you mean?"

"See here; you may be here alone, but you have comrades at some retreat, I am sure."

"You are trying to deceive me, and if I catch you leading me into a trap you will be camping right in the cañon when Gabriel blows his trumpet for saints and sinners to answer roll-call, and you'll have to break ground to get out."

"Now, pard, I'll tie you until my return," and, binding the prisoner to a tree, Buffalo Bill went on down the cañon.

Buffalo Bill not only secured his prisoner well, but he also gagged him, so that he could not call out and give warning did he have help near.

He did not leave his pack, for he did not know but that circumstances might prevent his return, and he wished to be ready for any emergency that might arise.

It was not long before he came to a horse staked out and grazing, with evident relish, upon the rich grass that grew near the springs in the cañon.

He passed the animal, and was glad to see that there was but one, for this helped out the prisoner's assertion that he was alone.

Near the lower spring, by the last glimmer of daylight, he beheld a saddle, bridle and pack.

He walked all about, and even went to the mouth of the cañon, but found nothing more.

Then he retraced his way, bridled and saddled the horse, took up the pack and rode a quarter of a mile further to the larger spring at the head of the cañon. He found his prisoner as he had left him, and, having staked the horse out again, gathered some wood from the willows about, soon had a fire burning in the crevice of the rocks, where it could not be seen by any one coming into the cañon below.

He arranged the traps about the fire, and then brought his prisoner there to wait while he prepared supper, removing the gag from his mouth and unbinding his hands, though leaving his feet securely tied together so that escape was impossible.

"You say you are alone here, and have no head quarter camp?"

"Yes."

"You have no oven or skillet with you, and yet here is bread baked in an oven, and this deersteak was fried in a frying-pan, yet you have none with you."

"Then you have a couple of days' provisions, even some baked potatoes and a raw onion, and I do not know of a garden within three hundred miles of here."

"Pard, you have lied to me, and I am somewhat rough on liars."

The prisoner made no reply, and, while getting supper ready, Buffalo Bill continued:

"May I ask where you got the saddle and bridle you have?"

"I traded with an Indian for them."

"What kind of an Indian?"

"I don't know, but I think he was a Piute."

"Well, it may have been, but more likely a Navajo. In either case, if you traded with the Indian, you are friendly with them, and that means that you are a renegade, and that is a bad position for a white man to find himself in."

"I am no renegade," growled the man.

"May I ask when you made this trade?"

"A long time ago."

"Indeed! and yet I saw that saddle and bridle in a store in a New Mexico town a little over two weeks ago, and selected it for a friend of mine to ride on a jaunt he intended to make—yes, and I notice blood upon it, too, and you have a fine English shawl among your traps, one that I also recognize as having belonged to my friend."

"I guess you will have to make a clean breast of it to save that neck of yours from a hemp cravat; but, come, supper is ready, and, as you intend to ease your conscience by a confession, eat freely."

The scout placed a well-filled plate before the man, some of the mountain sheep, nicely broiled, a roasted potato, raw onion, some bread, coffee and bacon, and, in spite of his dangerous situation, he ate heartily.

"Now, pard, I know that you are one of the gang of renegades that led the Indians against Major Mildmay and his party, and I expect you to guide me to the retreat where they are, and to make a clean breast of it all."

"If you do so, then you save your neck; but if you refuse to be my guide, then you shall go back with me on the trail, to my band of scouts, and I will turn you over to them as a white renegade."

"You know what the result will be, so decide."
 "I will be your guide in return for my life," was the quick response.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTIVE'S STORY.

Buffalo Bill kept his eye fixed upon the face of his prisoner.

Every movement of the face, every twitch of a muscle, and the slightest expression that flitted over it, he read carefully, to note just what it meant.

The prisoner had eagerly accepted his offer of terms.

But was it in good faith, with a desire to get out of a bad scrape by the sacrifice of others, or was it to secure favors, gain the confidence of the scout, and thus lead him into a trap?

For such a contingency Buffalo Bill must be prepared.

"Well, pard, what have you to sell?" he asked, quietly.

"What have you to offer?"

"Your life."

"I want gold, also."

"You will not get one dollar, only your life, no more, no less, with certain death by bullet if you do not accept my offer."

"It is just this way, Gabe Gurney:

"You are in a country where white men seldom come, and then only to fight Indians; or on missions of importance, and they never are such fools as to come alone."

"You are here alone."

The scout winced at this shot, but replied without showing that it hit dead center:

"Before my men finish with you, you may wish that I had come alone."

"But let me tell you that when men have come here in search of gold they have always been in parties of half-a-dozen and more, and, as proof of the danger of the country, they have never been heard from afterward."

"Massacred by Indians is the verdict returned upon them, and so it will be said of some friends of mine who came here two weeks ago."

"I have got the key to unlocking the mystery—myself—and I will know, or I will lose the key; so give you a chance."

"Indians are the tools, I have no doubt, but there are those behind the Indians, renegade white men—you see I am posted—and you can either tell me what you know or lose your life."

"Is Major Mildmay dead or alive?"

The man started at that direct question, but replied:

"He is alive."

"How about Old Harry Hazard?"

"He's all right."

"What force had Major Mildmay with him?"

"There were seven."

"Where were they attacked?"

"At Rocky Spring Range."

"Who by?"

"Indians."

"Who else?"

"Only Indians."

"You are not telling the truth."

"Well, there were white men who instigated it."

"You being one?"

"No, I was not one in that work."

"Why not?"

"Well, I'll out with the truth."

"It will help you."

"I came here with others to hunt gold."

"How many of you?"

"There were seven of us."

"Continue."

"Well, to keep others out, some of the party urged the Indians to guard the trails, and to whip the palefaces back, but I was not in favor of this."

"And so it was that parties have been attacked?"

"Yes."

"And Mildmay's party also?"

"Yes."

"They made a good fight?"

"A splendid fight, for the Englishman and Old Harry fought like demons."

"I thought that you were not there."

"I was told so."

"And they were captured and carried to your retreat?"

"No; they were taken to the Indian village."

"Well, you will go with me and show me the direct trail to that village, and aid me to rescue those men?"

"I'll do it, for I am no enemy of my own people," was the reply.

"There is something else I would like to ask you, Gabe Gurney," said Buffalo Bill, after he had pondered over the story told by the prisoner.

"Out with it, pard."

"Who is the Skeleton Scout?"

The eyes of Buffalo Bill were fixed piercingly upon the face of the man as he asked the question, and he noted the start given, the quick glance and falling of the eyes, and the compressed lips.

But this was but temporary, for the question came immediately:

"The Skeleton Scout?"

"Yes. Have you never heard of him?"

"No."

"Do you mean that you have never heard of a person known as the Skeleton Scout?"

"Who is he?"

"A weird mass of bones that haunts the trails and warns people back from this country."

"Not a ghost?" and the man spoke in an awed whisper.

"Some men think so; but you do not believe in such things?"

"I won't say that, for I have seen strange sights since I came into this country."

"Such as——"

"Once I did not believe in ghosts, but I tell you, Mr. Cody, I do now."

"You seem to know me pretty well for one who is a stranger to me."

"I have heard that your name was Cody, and that men called you Buffalo Bill because——"

"We are discussing ghosts just now, Mr. Gabe Gurney, not W. F. Cody."

"I don't know anything about such a thing as the Skeleton Scout, but I do believe that the dead walk the earth in spirit form."

"But this is in bony form, Gurney."

"It's all the same, and I would not meet him for a great deal."

"Oh, Lord!" and the prisoner glanced about him with a look of terror.

"You act well, Gurney, but I am not to be deceived."

"I am not trying to deceive you."

"All right; I will give you another chance, for now it is time we turned in."

The chief then bound the hands of his prisoner securely, spread his blankets for him, made him lie down, and covered him up.

He had put him next to the cliff, in a crevice, and, lying down himself on the outer side, after he had made a search about the surroundings, he knew that he could not escape unless he freed himself and stepped over him without waking him, two things impossible, the scout concluded, to be done.

Once or twice in the night a movement of his prisoner awoke the scout, and his hand quickly felt the bonds, but found them secure.

The day dawned to find the man safe, and his hands and feet slightly swollen from being bound, so Buffalo Bill quickly untied him and made him bathe in the cool waters of the spring.

After breakfast Buffalo Bill led the horse up to the upper end of the cañon, and, with fallen trees, which he cut with the hatchet he always carried, he made a barrier across the defile that would keep the animals secure in a pasture where there was water and grass enough to last for weeks.

"Now, Gurney, we will start on our tramp, and I will, of course, let you go without any bonds upon you; but I warn you that I will kill you at the first attempt you make to escape, or to give an alarm if we run upon any of your pards or Indian allies."

"I know when to keep my mouth shut; but I told you I would help you."

"All right; I'll trust you—within reach of my revolver."

"Your horse can take care of himself, for I do not intend to take him."

"I am not much of a walker."

"Yet a prospector; how do you reconcile the two statements?"

"Why not take the horse, for he could carry our packs, and give each of us a lift?"

"And betray us."

"No; this is a secret expedition, Gurney, and not to be advertised."

"I do not wish to kill your horse, or to turn him loose, so will leave him there penned up, hoping he will not be found by any one while we are gone."

"Now start and lead the way."

The prisoner shouldered his pack, and, with something very like a smothered oath, set off on the trail down the cañon.

Nearing the river the trail wound up the steep ridge of a cliff along a lofty ridge, and then toward the stream, when, after a tramp of over thirty miles, the river burst into view far below.

The scout forgot his fatigue in the grand view presented before him, and, seeing that he was spell-bound, the prisoner suddenly stepped backward a pace, then another and another until he was ten paces away.

He was just about to start away when the scout turned like lightning and his revolver was in his hand and leveled.

"One inch more, Gurney, and it will be your last move in life."

"I was only going to lie down yonder and rest."

"It came very near being your last rest."

The man shuddered at the words and tone of the scout, who continued:

"All along the trail to-day I have had to urge you on; I have carried your pack as well as my own, have helped you all I could, and yet you would have bounded away like a deer just now, in an instant more, if I had not seen you."

"Now, sir, I'll keep a lasso about you."

"Don't tie me!"

"I'll not hurt you, only have you within reach if I want you suddenly, and, besides, I fear you may fall off these cliffs."

The scout then bound the lariat about the waist of his prisoner, and slipped the loop end over his own shoulders.

Gazing again at the scene before him, he asked:

"How do we cross the river, for the trails on this side center there at yonder point I see."

"You will have to swim across, but I cannot swim."

"I can teach you in one lesson, and you will be de-

lighted to know the art; but what smoke is that curling up yonder in that cañon on the other side?"

"An Indian camp, I guess."

The scout took out his field-glass, and, leveling it, said:

"I see a boat on the other side, and to-night I will swim across and get it, for I can paddle you over quicker than I could teach you to swim, Gurney."

The scout marked the change in the man's face at his discovery of the smoke and the canoe, but he simply said:

"Now, we will go into hiding in some safe place until night, and then I will go after the boat."

Binding his prisoner and gagging him once more, Buffalo Bill left him and went off to reconnoiter.

He closely examined the several trails leading to the ferry, and decided that all those that had divided at the fatal camp had met there at that point on the Colorado.

That they had crossed there was no doubt, and once beyond the river the redskins had doubtless hurried on to their village, with their captives.

But where had the white renegades gone?

They certainly had not gone on with the Indians, when they were gold-hunting along the Colorado River.

Nor had they, in the scout's mind, allowed the Indians to take their white prisoners.

They must have gone then to some retreat not far from that crossing, and perhaps upon the very side of the river where he then stood.

Having decided on his course, the scout noted his surroundings, marked the spot where the boat was tied under some willows, measured with his eyes the river at that point, and said:

"I'll come back after dark and make the swim, for it is not over a quarter of a mile, and the boat will carry all across in safety.

"Then I must find a camp for the night, and to-morrow that fellow must show me his retreat, or I'll leave him bound and hungry while I look for it myself."

Returning to his prisoner, Buffalo Bill began to prepare supper, as soon as he had loosened the bonds on the man's hands and feet and removed the gag.

Gurney showed a willingness to talk, but the scout did not encourage him, and sternly went to work.

After supper was over, the traps were packed up, and the prisoner's hands tied behind him, while he

was gagged as well, for the scout did not care to take any chances of his giving a call for help.

His feet were left free, so that he could walk, and then Buffalo Bill led the way by the trail he had followed in the afternoon.

He reached the river bank, threw aside his clothing and plunged in.

The water was icy cold, coming, as it did, from the mountains, and Buffalo Bill knew full well the danger of being seized with a cramp, or, losing his strength, being carried down into the rapids below.

On, on he swam, with the same vigorous stroke he had struck at leaving the bank, the middle of the river was reached, then the dark bank ahead grew more and more distinct.

Clambering out upon the rocks, he beheld the willows near at hand, and beneath them was the boat, tied to an overhanging branch.

He went out upon this, and lowered himself into the boat, which he found to be a canoe, hewn out of a solid log.

There was a paddle in the canoe, and, untying it, he was soon going toward the other shore, for the thought came over him that for the first time in years, he was wholly unarmed, his rifle and belt of arms being with his clothes upon the other bank.

When he was once more armed, he felt like another man, and walked with a quick step to where he had left the prisoner.

There he found him, but he had first carried the packs to the canoe and placed them in it.

Then he returned, and, unbinding the feet of the man, bade him get up and follow him.

The prisoner obeyed, yet appeared to walk with difficulty, and the scout aided him along.

"Unbind my hands so that I can swim if we capsize."

"Ah! you swim, then?" quickly said the scout.

"No, but I could struggle."

"Come, into the canoe."

The prisoner obeyed, the scout following, and the canoe started across.

Again the scout sought for a good hiding-place, and, finding it, led the prisoner there and bound and gagged him, as he had done when leaving him alone before.

Then he returned for his traps from the canoe, and to place it where he had found it.

With the packs upon his shoulders, he returned to

the spot where he had left his captive, to stop suddenly at what he beheld.

There was a weird light there, it seemed, and by its glare, instead of his prisoner, he beheld facing him, and with arms extended—the form of the Skeleton Scout!

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Under the plea that he suffered from a sprain in one hand, Buffalo Bill's prisoner had asked to have the bonds tied less closely, and the scout had humanely yielded.

When the scout went after the traps in the boat the captive set to work, and was not long in loosening the bonds about his wrists.

He at last got one hand free, then the other, released the gag from his mouth, and, hearing the scout coming back, he cried:

"It is my only chance, for I have no time to free myself—I will try it."

A few minutes more and Buffalo Bill appeared, and, standing where the moonlight fell upon him, he beheld the Skeleton Scout.

It looked ghastly, startling enough; but Buffalo Bill decided upon a plan of action.

Just then the spectral form moved toward him, with swaying arms.

"Back! back! for God's sake don't haunt me!" cried the scout, and, reeling, he fell his length upon the ground.

"Fainted, by Heaven! I'll kill him with his own knife," and the weird form, with a cry of joy hobbled to the side of the scout, bent over and found himself in a grasp of iron, while he heard the words:

"I didn't faint away enough to please you!" cried Buffalo Bill, leaping to his feet. "It was simply a ruse on my part!"

Then began a desperate struggle for mastery, until, finding that he could not clutch the man's throat, Buffalo Bill began to deal telling blows into Gurney's face, until he had stunned him.

"Well, I've caught the Skeleton Scout, and he is my prisoner."

"I'm hurt bad," said the man.

"I'll doctor you up so the hangman won't miss his game; but what a beauty you look in that costume at close quarters."

Over his head he had drawn a skull mask, when he determined to try once more to frighten Buffalo Bill, and, throwing off his outer clothing, had appeared in black tights, upon which was painted, both front and back, a skeleton form in white.

"Pard, I've had all I want, and if you will give me my life and set me free after I have kept my word to you, I'll tell you about your friends."

"I'll do it; but I'll swear to you that if you fail me I'll take the back trail to the soldier camp, and Lieutenant Ames will hang you."

"I will do as you say, only you must find out when it will be safe to rescue your friends, as, if the gang is in the cave, they will torture me to death as a traitor, for I am chief and play the part of the Skeleton Scout to scare away other gold-hunters. By haunting the trails I have done so in the past."

"And you hold the Englishman and his party prisoners?"

"The Englishman and Old Harry, yes; but three of the men were killed in our attack on them, and Mexican Joe and Texas are secretly members of our band, spies we keep in the settlement and about the forts."

"I see, but why did you wish to capture the Englishman?"

"To hold for ransom, as I have held another Englishman a prisoner for years."

"Ah! Captain Champ?"

"Yes."

"And he's in the cave?"

"Yes, with Mildmay and Old Harry."

"Good! But how did you capture Mildmay's party?"

"Oh, with Indians, and we kept at them, though the Englishman and Old Harry fought like devils."

"And Captain Champ you have held for ransom?"

"Yes, until I could get ransom for him, for I intended to make him pay me some day."

"By Heaven! Bet you are Denny, the Gold Guide!"

"As Old Harry knows it, I may as well own up."

"And you will guide me——"

"For my life and pardon."

"Yes, for your life and pardon you will guide me to your cave."

"Yes, by day, for the men will all be away prospecting, save one on guard."

"How many men have you?"

"Seven of us now, for Mildmay and Old Harry killed four and any number of Indians."

The next morning the prisoner, securely bound, led the way to a wild cañon and said:

"The cave is at its head—leave me here until you go on and see how things are."

"I will; but you'll not escape me this time," and when Buffalo Bill left him the prisoner certainly had no chance for it.

Going on up the cañon, he saw a man lying on a blanket on the ground, and he soon felt sure that he was asleep.

"The outlaw guard," he muttered, and, rifle at a ready, he crept on and woke him up with:

"Hands up, pard, and a word aloud ends your life."

The man was scared half to death, and Buffalo Bill had no trouble in binding and gagging him.

Then he entered the cave, and, by a light struggling through overhead, beheld Major Mildmay, Old Harry and a man whom he did not know, all in irons.

"Gentlemen, how are you?"

Exclamations broke from the lips of the three, and Buffalo Bill grasped their hands, while Major Mildmay cried:

"You have found us, Buffalo Bill, and my friend Villers as well, for here he is, long a prisoner."

"I told you Buffalo Bill would git heur ef he brought ther army at his back, 'cause I knows him."

"But I'm alone, and there are five outlaws to prepare for, so I'll bring the Skeleton Scout here, as he has the keys of your irons," and Buffalo Bill hastened away, to soon return with the Gold Guide, Denny, still in his skeleton masquerade.

He did have the keys, and the irons were soon unlocked, and the weapons of the prisoners found and given to them.

Then a plan was arranged to meet the outlaws; but they returned earlier than expected, as Denny knew they would. He had hoped to be set free, and see the Buffalo Bill party wiped out.

He had planned it all to catch the great scout.

"Fire!" cried Buffalo Bill, and the fight was short and deadly, for, being in the light, the outlaws were seen, while back in the darkness of the cave the scout and his party were not visible, and escaped with only a few flesh wounds.

As for the renegades, it was a wipe-out, for Denny

and the guard, bound as they were, fell by the fire of their own men.

"Now to get horses and leave here, for the Indian village is only a couple of miles away."

Captain Champ, however, explained that the horses were up in a valley near the Indian village, and it was decided to take what things they actually needed and get away.

Buffalo Bill led the way, the canoe took all across the river, and they walked through the night to the place where the horse of the Skeleton Scout had been left.

A halt was made for rest and breakfast, then all the things were packed on the horse, and the trail was continued.

Thus they went on, Captain Champ, or Villers, to call him by his right name, having to ride, as he was weak from long confinement. The next day at noon Buffalo Bill discovered that a large force of Indians was on their trail.

"It must be a stand-at-bay fight, while you, Captain Villers, take the horse, and follow the trail. You will meet Lieutenant Ames not far away, I feel certain," cried Buffalo Bill.

Half-an-hour after the Indians came in sight; but so did Lieutenant Ames, his soldiers and the scouts, and with the lieutenant rode Captain Villers.

"That settles it, Major Mildmay—your trail to find your friend is successful."

"Thanks to you, my brave friend," said the British officer, with deep feeling.

The Indians, not knowing the force of the soldiers, turned in flight, and back over the trail the white men turned to Fort Wingate, where a warm welcome awaited them.

A month later Major Mildmay and Captain Villers left the frontier, and, reaching England, the long-lost officer became the direct heir to the lordly estate. He is still remembered in the West, and Old Harry never tires of telling the story of how Buffalo Bill went with him on a phantom hunt.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 50) will contain "Buffalo Bill's Brother in Buckskin; or, The Redskin Lariat Rangers." The kind of a story you like to read, boys. A story of tangled trails and desperate fights, another of the thrilling adventures with which Buffalo Bill's wild life has been crowded.



THRILLING ADVENTURE



Get a hustle on, boys. You're on the last lap. Last week of this contest, you know. All entries must be in before May 1. Remember that the rule cannot be broken.

Hasn't the contest been a corker! Make a hot finish of it, boys. Let the last week of the contest be the banner week.

The Stolen Ride.

(By Louis R. Spencer, Tenn.)

My cousin, Charles Davies, has a beautiful thoroughbred. She is black and very fiery.

I had often begged Charles to let me drive her, but he always refused, fearing that she might run away with me.

Growing tired of his refusals, I formed a plan to drive her. Bribing the stable boy not to tell on me, I took the horse out, and let me tell you I'll never do such a thing again.

I was driving along admiring the country and thinking of the joke I was playing on Charley, when a horrid old sow and six nasty little, squealing pigs came grunting along.

Now, Hallie is a city horse, and she just naturally hates country animals, so she started out on a run, but cooled down as we came to town, and all unconscious of my fate, down Market street I drove. Charley, coming around the corner, saw me and started out after me, picking up a whip.

I ordered Hallie on. On hearing her master's voice she had stopped.

She would not move, so down came the whip, for I was determined not to take my scolding on the public street. Away she bounded instantly, the gentle horse transformed into an angry brute, with one sweep of her tail snatched the lines from my hands and away at a 2:40 rate she went.

Now, I'm not going to say that I wasn't frightened for I was.

On and on she ran, and in trying to turn a corner the crash came.

Half an hour later I awakened to find mother bending over me, and I heard Dr. Sever say:

"It's only a knock on the head."

A Runaway Into the Creek.

(By Willis Haycock, Neb.)

It was about three years ago. My uncle brought a horse to my father's place.

I had to go up to town that night after school. The horse had been ridden before, but only a few times.

I went uptown all right. But coming back I had a bridge to cross. There is a turn just before you come to the bridge. In town my horse got frightened at a little girl's coat with red binding around it. I supposed that was it.

Coming down a street, a friend of mine saw the horse.

He thought the horse was just seeing how fast it could run.

When I passed him he threw his hat in the air and hollered:

"Go it, Bill!"

I was a-going it, I can tell you.

My hat was blown off my head. I came to the turn I loosened my feet from the stirrups.

The horse slipped, took the railing off the bridge and fell back down in the creek.

I, by accident, had slipped off the horse. If I had not taken my feet from the stirrups I would not have been writing this story.

He Got What He Deserved.

(By Lyam Ferguson, Wis.)

It was a rainy, slushy day. A big minstrel show was coming to town, and a gang of boys were going to skip school and get a pass to the show.

My best chum and I got caught, and our mother gave us a note to take to school, telling the teacher to give us a whipping, so we decided to run away. We had no money, so we were going to walk. We started out on the river on the ice and had not gone far when we heard the ice crack. I jumped to the shore and I saw my chum in the icy water. I found a plank, but it would not reach him, so I threw off my coat and hat and jumped in.

He grasped me and would not let go. "Let go, Bill, or we will both drown," I cried, but he held on and at last I hit him a stunning blow between the eyes.

He let go. A man appeared on the shore with a boathook and got us out and gave us money to go home on the car.

We got home and our mothers welcomed us back.

In Deadly Peril.

(By Frank Holdewith, N. J.)

One autumn morning I went out fishing with two other boys. We walked half a mile to the waters known as Newark Bay.

We went on the Bay Bridge and cast out our lines and started to fish, and caught several fish. We were fishing perhaps an hour when one of the boys said to me:

"You want to be careful of the trains that cross this bridge."

Now, this bridge had only ties at about a foot and a half apart, so that a person had to be careful not to fall through. We were fishing away, when I got up from my sitting position and walked directly in the middle of the track, whistling gayly, when all of a sudden I heard the shrill whistle of a locomotive almost on top of me.

"My goodness!" says I, "this is my end." But it seemed my end wasn't to come yet.

There was but one chance in a thousand to save myself, and that chance was to drop through the ties and into the waters of the bay. Quick as a flash, I took in the situation, and I jumped into the bay. But what made things worse I could not swim. So far I was unharmed, but now my only thought was that I should save myself from drowning, as none of my friends could swim. I was in deadly peril, but it seemed that our Lord above stood with me in my peril, for the current shoved me against the spiles, and I grasped them with both hands and pulled myself up safe to the top of the bridge where my friends were looking on with faces as pale as death, and too badly frightened to say a word.

They soon got over their fright when they saw I was safe. I made them promise not to tell my parents or anybody else, for I was afraid that my father wouldn't let me go fishing there any more. I was none the worse for my experience except that I had a cold bath and a bad fright.

An Adventure with a Gila Monster.

(By Victor Brink, Or.)

I have traveled with my parents and my uncle in a covered wagon all the way from Kansas City to Los Angeles, where we had to go on account of my mother's health.

She was consumptive, and the doctor had told us that three or four months spent in the open air would be very beneficial to her.

We camped out every night, and I enjoyed it very much, although I had a very narrow escape from death on one of these camping-grounds.

We had settled ourselves for the night at a sheltered canyon fifteen miles south of Phoenix, Arizona, and my mother had rolled me in my blankets and was talking to my uncle when

looking sideways she suddenly saw a large Gila monster creeping slowly toward me. I was lying on my back, my right arm stretched away from me and my hand was touching the ground. For this hand the fingers of which I moved restlessly in my sleep, the monster seemed to be heading, and had almost reached it when suddenly my uncle turned around to expectorate. Not knowing of the presence of the reptile, he turned in its direction and being an inveterate tobacco chewer, the biting juice hit the monster squarely in the eye.

The scream of my mother could be heard for miles. The monster itself recoiled and then fairly leaping over me jumped on to my uncle, who had not yet realized what mischief he had done. It dug its horrible jaws into my uncle's left leg and held on like grim death.


"Shoot it!" he yelled, but my father had already lifted the ax and with one stroke cut the monster almost in two.

A few minutes' silence and then the tension relaxed.

"Oh, the fool!" my uncle hollered.

"Why, Frank, what is the matter?" exclaimed my mother, still shaking with the excitement.

"Ha! ha! it bit my cork leg! ha! ha!" roared my uncle, and opening his overalls he unloosened a few straps and slung the leg and monster away from him. He had lost his leg in the battle of Gettysburg, but what had been his misfortune in that battle turned out to be his luck on this night, and either of us would have been doomed to a painful death if the monster had attacked us in a vulnerable spot, because it never lets go until it is chopped off, and its bite is more poisonous and venomous than that of a rattlesnake.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Side Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up, Jim Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing, half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large file, cut 'g' of plays, wigs, tricks & acts, latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate Ringer Ring FREE, send size. Address: Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.

ANOTHER PRIZE CONTEST!

MORE THRILLING ADVENTURES

SPALDING CATCHERS' MITTS, INFELDERS' GLOVES, BASEBALL BATS

AND LONG DISTANCE MEGAPHONES ARE THE PRIZES THIS TIME.

HERE IS THE PLAN

You know what exciting stories of hairbreath escapes and thrilling experiences you have been reading in the **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY** lately. You want to read more like them, don't you? Well, send them in. You have a splendid chance for the splendid prizes we offer in this contest. You have all had some narrow escape. Some dangerous adventure in your lives. Write it up just as it happened.

We offer a handsome prize for the most exciting and best written anecdote sent us by any reader of **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**. Incident, of course, must relate to something that happened to the writer himself, and it must also be strictly true. It makes no difference how short the articles are, but no contribution must be longer than 500 words.

THIS CONTEST WILL CLOSE MAY 1

Send in your anecdotes, boys. We are going to publish all of the best ones during the progress of the contest.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

THE THREE BOYS WHO SEND US THE BEST ANECDOTES will each receive a first-class Spalding Catcher's Mitt. Made throughout of a specially tanned and selected buckskin, strong and durable, soft and pliable and extra well padded. Has patent lace back.

THE THREE BOYS WHO SEND THE NEXT BEST ANECDOTES will each receive a Spalding's Infelder's Glove. Made throughout of selected velvet tanned buckskin, lined and correctly padded with finest felt. Highest quality of workmanship throughout.

THE TEN BOYS WHO SEND THE NEXT BEST ANECDOTES will each receive an A1 Spalding League Baseball Bat. Made of the very best selected second growth white ash timber, grown on high land. No swamp ash is used in making these bats. Absolutely the best bat made.

THE TEN BOYS WHO SEND US THE NEXT BEST ANECDOTES will each receive a Spalding 12-inch "Long Distance" Megaphone. Made of fireboard, capable of carrying the sound of a human voice one mile, and in some instances, two miles. More fun than a barrel of monkeys.

TO BECOME A CONTESTANT FOR THESE PRIZES cut out the Anecdote Contest Coupon, printed herewith, fill it out properly and send it to **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your anecdote. No anecdote will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

Coupon Buffalo Bill Weekly Anecdote Contest

PRIZE CONTEST NO. 3.

Date.....

Name.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Title of Anecdote.....

BOYHOODS OF FAMOUS MEN.

No. 27—Bruin Adams (J. F. C. Adams).

Like many another border hero, J. F. C. Adams, later known as "Bruin Adams," and a nephew of the also famous "Old Grizzly Adams," was a native of New York State.

Old Grizzly Adams was born in the family homestead on Seneca Lake, and started forth as a boy to the Wild West to carry out a strange hobby he had to catch wild animals as cubs and train them for a grand circus.

He reached the frontier after many adventures, settled alone in the Rocky Mountains, caught cubs and reared and trained them until he had a wonderful menagerie and became known as a remarkable old hermit and Indian fighter.

He was a remarkable old character, and only in his old age was it that he "sprung his menagerie" upon the public, being engaged by P. T. Barnum.

But civilization was the death of the old man, and he died after a year's work in the East.

Bruin Adams was wont to read strange stories of this "old man of the mountains," and how he had saved a fort from massacre, killed scores of Indians, had a "graveyard of his own," of outlaws who had gone to his retreat to kill and rob him, believing he had found gold.

Young Bruin, then known as J. F. C. Adams, and one of the most adventurous boys on Seneca Lake, was fired by these stories to go and see his strange old uncle.

He was known as a daring boy, a fine hunter, would spend weeks alone trapping and hunting, and venture to cross Seneca Lake in his Indian canoe in the wildest storm.

Once he broke his leg while across the lake, set it himself, splinted it and with crutches he made started for home.

He got along slowly for a dozen miles, then camped for the night, kept on the slow trail the next day until with his arms blistered from the crutches, he decided to hide his traps and swim the half-dozen miles that would take him to within a quarter of a mile of his home.

He found a light log, made a paddle, took his dinner and started, partly supporting his weight on the log.

He was a tireless swimmer, but with his broken leg it was a drag upon him, and it was hard and mighty slow going.

To rest he got on the log, and used his paddle. This was also slow going, but he kept moving, and after hours of work had gotten half-way.

Then he rested and ate his dinner, and began to paddle again.

Again he swam, pushing his log, and so first one way, then the other, kept on.

It was midnight when at last he was able to crawl ashore, but at a point half a mile from his home.

He sank down utterly worn out and went to sleep.

How long he lept he did not know; but he awoke, cold, stiff and still wet through.

He had not brought his crutches, and his arms were too sore to use them if he had, so he slung his leg as best he could, and began to hop home.

It was just sunrise when he hopped up to the kitchen door and fell fainting.

The doctor when sent for said the leg was well set, and to the surprise of all the boy wanted a good breakfast.

It was a couple of months before he got around again, and he spent his time seated in the yard firing at a target.

At sixteen the youth decided to carry out the one aim of his life, which was to go to the Rocky Mountains and find his uncle, "Old Grizzly" Adams.

"We have not heard from my brother for years, and I am sure the boy will find him if he is alive.

"Then, too, the boy's head is set that way, and he can take care of himself," said the father.

The mother yielded, and the youth began to prepare for his journey.

He had made considerable money from selling pelts and antlers, and he purchased a large horse, saddle and bridle that just suited him, along with a pair of large saddle bags, roll of blankets, rubber blankets and light cooking outfit.

A Winchester rifle, pair of revolvers, knife and corduroy suit of clothes, top boots and slouch hat made his outfit complete.

A bag of provisions was supplied by his mother, with a small Bible and several books, for he was a great reader, and the covers he tore off to save weight.

"I weigh one hundred and twenty-five pounds, and my saddle, weapons and outfit complete fifty-five more, a good load for my horse," he said.

It was a tearful good-by, but the boy kept a stiff upper lip and started at dawn one morning.

The first day he made thirty miles and camped. The next day it was forty, and after that fifty miles was his average, from dawn until dark.

Several times he stopped at farmhouses, or in the towns, but he wished to keep his money, as he had just one hundred dollars on leaving home.

In four weeks he had put a thousand miles behind him, for he always rested Sundays, went to church if near one, or read his books.

Then he traded his horse and got even a better road animal in return, with ten dollars to boot.

Three months found him over two thousand miles from home, and mounted upon his fifth horse, while his trading still left him a fine animal and he had paid all of his expenses, and had to boot five dollars more than he had started from home with.

He had met with a number of adventures, but in the light of what he had to face later he regarded them as trifles.

He had written his mother each Sunday, but as he did not know the exact trail he would take, he could not give dates ahead, so only had heard from home once. The letter told of how their prayers and good wishes were with him. In Chicago, he halted a week, again in Omaha a few days, and there he found that he was in the wild western country.

In Omaha he traded for another horse, and, under the advice of a man he had traveled with, changed his outfit for one better suited for the work ahead, one change being into a suit of buckskin.

His new-found friend seemed to be a good fellow, generous, and gave him much good advice.

They left Omaha together, as the man was going his way, being an army officer, he said, going to his command at Fort McPherson.

The youth liked him, but at a camp on the way saw his new friend in close conversation with a heavily-bearded and very tough citizen, who rode a claybank horse with silver mane and tail.

At a camp they made further on, the youth was surprised, in looking back over the trail, to suddenly see this strange man and horse ride into view, but quickly dodge out of sight again.

He was suspicious, did not like it, and determined to be on the watch, even of his companion.

It was well that he did, as that night the man insisted upon going off the trail to a camping-place he knew, and he voluntarily spread the youth's blankets in a way that seemed as though he wanted them in a certain place for a purpose.

This made young Adams more suspicious, especially as that afternoon his friend had dropped back on the trail for a while. They had their supper, and Adams went to bed, leaving the man smoking by the fire, which he had rekindled.

Then he slipped away, believing the youth asleep, and quickly Adams rolled his blankets into a shape that looked as though he occupied them, seized his rifle and belt of arms and

slipped behind the rock at the base of which his bed had been made.

He might be wrong, but he would not be caught asleep.

He waited for an hour, and then into the shadowy glimmer of the firelight came two forms.

They halted, raised their rifles and fired together at—the blankets.

Young Adams also fired once, twice, and one man fell, while the other, who had run into the full light of the fire, held up his hands and cried:

"Hands is up, pard! Don't shoot!"

It was the bearded man he had seen talking to his fellow traveler.

His false friend lay dead, and the other was slightly wounded.

"I will kill you if you move," and the youth advanced with his rifle leveled.

"Lie down!"

"What for, pard, fer I hain't done nothin'—it were him?"

"Do as I tell you!"

The man obeyed, was disarmed and securely tied.

"Say, young pard, he told me as you had lots o' money an' I was ter foller on inter ther wild country and he was ter do yer. But I did yer no harm!"

"No, because I was not asleep, but there is a settlement ahead, I have heard, and I will take you there."

"Lordy! they'll hang me!"

Young Adams made no reply as to that, but asked where the claybank horse was, and made the man lead him there.

He was at a small camp a quarter of a mile away, and was brought and placed with the other horses, after which the youth went to sleep.

He awoke at dawn and had breakfast, giving the prisoner his share; but his appetite was not good.

His prisoner begged, offered a large sum of money, and did all he could to get his release.

But the youth tied him and the body upon the horses, and then continued on the trail.

Twenty miles further he came to a large, scattering settlement and reported what had occurred to the proper authorities.

Horses were saddled to bring in the men from their work, the prisoner and the dead man were both recognized as bad men, and it took just twenty minutes for a trial of the man who still begged the youth to say he was not guilty.

But there were the two bullet holes in the blankets, the two shots missing from the rifles, and the word of young Adams was taken, while both men had upon them stolen jewelry to show that they were robbers.

A hanging quickly followed and then a double burial.

"I'm learning quickly about wild life out here," said young Adams, who remained for a rest of a couple of days in the settlement.

The horses he was told to take—in fact, all the men had was his, but one horse he did take as a pack animal, and the fine weapons of his false friend, giving the jewelry and all else to be sold to help along any cripple who needed aid in the settlement.

When he rode on his way he was followed by a cheer, and his pack saddle was loaded with eggs, home-made bread, butter, preserves and warm knit clothing, for winter was coming on.

The youth was certainly a hero to the good people of the settlement.

Continuing on his way alone, young Adams made the forts his objective points, with his destination the place from which the last letter from his uncle had come.

It was just five months after leaving home that he arrived at this place, a military post in the foothills of the Rockies.

He had started upon his long trail in May, and he reached the post in October.

Snow had already begun to fly, and he knew that he dared not go into the mountains then.

Yes, Old Grizzly Adams was known at the post, as an odd character, a tamer of wild animals and a hermit.

He had lately been to the post for supplies, but had gone.

Glad to know that his uncle was still alive, young Adams wrote his parents a long letter and told them that in April he would start for the mountains, but until then he would remain at the post and learn much from the soldiers and scouts.

The scouts took a fancy to the youth and he was invited to live in their camp, while, as he had always been a good student, in spite of his roving life and love of hunting, he entered the post school and settled down to hard work on his books.

At night he listened to the stories of the scouts of wild Western life, and often he went with them on scouting expeditions.

He learned the manual of drill, took fencing lessons and became an expert swordsman, while he kept up a thorough athletic training, and daily shot at targets with rifle and revolver.

In this way the six months of winter passed away, and in April, though it was yet cold, he determined to start on the search for his uncle.

He had gained much knowledge from the scouts, and was regarded as already a good plainsman and one who could take care of himself.

He was told where the Indian villages were, how to avoid dangers and about the country where he would find his uncle, although no one seemed to know just where his cabin was.

The weapons he had gotten from his false friend, the saddle and bridle, some good blankets and a suit of clothes, with a lot of supplies, he intended for presents for his uncle.

With his own horse, the claybank and a pack animal—the last two well laden—he started one morning from the post, several scouts going with him a couple of days' journey on his way.

Then with hearty good wishes they left him to depend upon himself.

For that day and the first night in camp, he felt very lonesome indeed.

But he read over the letters received from home just before he left the post, and said:

"It takes half a year to write home and get an answer—my! but I am a long way off."

Two days after his knowledge of the weather told him a storm was coming on, and he began to seek a good camping-place.

This he did, and with an ax and his hatchet he cut trees and brush and made a rude shelter for himself and his horses.

He gathered wood, and young leaves for the horses to feed upon, and had just gotten ready when the snow began to fall. The winter had not yet ended.

That a blizzard was coming on he knew, and with the night it broke with great fury.

"This shelter saves me," he muttered, and he cuddled away in a warm corner, after heaping heavy logs upon the fire. He had tied the horses close together in the shelter and blanketed them warmly, so felt that they were comfortable.

All through the night the blizzard raged, and the next day it kept up.

The snow had piled up about and over his shelter, and made it warmer.

He fed the horses with the green leaves, melted snow in a pan, and gave them a drink, had his breakfast and then read his books.

Thus the day passed, with another meal and water, a building up of the fire and night came on.

When he awoke the next morning the storm was over, and he led out his horses to water them at a stream near, and to pick what eating the young leaves afforded.

The snow was feet deep on the level, and in great drifts, and it was two days before he dared venture away from his shelter.

But at last he did so, going only a few miles each day until the sun, gathering in warmth, melted the snow.

For several weeks he pushed on, and then came to the conclusion that he had gone wrong.

But not discouraged, he kept on, studied his scout's map and crossing a valley saw smoke ahead.

He turned back, and at night went on foot, and discovered a large Indian camp.

Quickly he returned to his horses and pushed rapidly away from that locality, camping at daybreak and going to sleep.

He was awakened by a snort from the claybank, and saw a quarter of a mile away three mounted Indians coming toward his camp.

He at once got ready for them, and being discovered they fired on him.

It was quick, sharp work, one of his horses, the pack animal, was killed, and he was slightly wounded; but two of the

Indians were dead and the third had a bad wound, while one of their ponies had been shot.

By signs the youth gave him to understand that he would be a friend, and he carried him to his camp, and dressed the wound, which was in his side.

Then he looked after his own wound, which was in his arm.

There was water near, plenty of wood and grass for his own and the Indian pony, so the youth would not leave the redskin, who was a young chief, to die alone, for he felt sure that he would not recover.

And then for two weeks the brave boy stayed with the dying redskin. He had buried the other two decently, and on waking one morning, found that he had another grave to dig.

Then, using the two Indian ponies as pack animals, young Adams was glad to again start on his way.

In the next two weeks he did not "find himself," but he had killed a couple of large bears, all the game he wanted, had seen no more Indians and was not discouraged.

"Six weeks gone and I cannot just seem to find my way, according to the descriptions given me by the scouts.

"I will just go back over my trail, study my map and start over."

This he did, and he got back in ten days to a place not far from the post.

His splendid knowledge of woodcraft had enabled him to retrace his way, and though he felt very anxious when getting near the Indian village and his old camp, he got by safely.

Then resting for several days, he studied his map diligently and once more started.

He saw where he had gone wrong, going to the right of a mountain spur instead of to the left.

One evening, as he was seeking a good camping-place, he heard a quick shot to his left, down a hill, followed by others. What he saw was a white man, fallen on his back, and a bear, a huge grizzly rushing upon him.

From his saddle the youth fired, and his Winchester fairly poured out a stream of lead.

The aim was good, too, for the huge bear fell dead within ten feet of the man.

Quickly young Adams spurred down the ridge, loading his

Winchester, and was just in time, for the mate of the first bear was rushing forward for game.

His frightened horse reared and fell backward, but the boy caught on his feet and met the grizzly with shot after shot that did the work.

"Waal, you is suthin' o' a bar fighter yerself. Yer saved me, pard, fer I had fell an' were hurted, but I wudn't let go ther cub an' ther she mammy were mad clean through, while ther he grizzly wan't in no tickled mood.

"Who is yer, anyhow, fer yer hain't much over a cub yerself?"

"I've found him," muttered young Adams, gazing upon the gray-bearded, long-haired man before him, with a wolfskin cap, deerskin coat, leggings and moccasins.

"I am from Seneca Lake, New York, and my name is Adams, while I came here to find you, uncle, if you are Old Grizzly Adams."

"I is, fer a fact, an' you is Young Bruin Adams, for so I name yer right now."

Words cannot picture the scene that followed, for Old Grizzly threw the young cub he held upon the ground and grasped the boy in his arms.

Then explanations followed, and the old man led the way to his cabin, several miles distant.

Arriving there, "Bruin" Adams found a fort-like structure, splendidly located, a rock corral and in it tame bears, wolves, panthers, deer, wildcats, owls, hawks and other birds.

It was indeed a menagerie, a whole circus in itself.

The horses were put in the pasture, supper was gotten and until late into the night the two talked of home, the old man crying like a child over all told him by the youth of home.

Two months later Bruin Adams started for the fort for supplies, and to mail letters from both of them home.

He came back within a couple of weeks, passed the long winter with his uncle, who was then willing to go East with his "menagerie" to give a show with Barnum.

But Bruin Adams remained out West and was soon known as the greatest hunter in the Rocky Mountains.

In time he became post trader, and then was appointed Indian agent, made a fortune, went back to the old home, and died there years after.

ALL THE WORLD FOLLOWS

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